

Stranger Things 3 by Commernator

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Summary: After another year in hiding, Mike and Eleven will finally be able to be together. But can their lives ever be normal? Will Brenner come back for Eleven? Will there be justice for Mews? Probably not. (My ideas for Season 3 of ST. Just felt like I had to get it out on paper and that I would share it. Major Season 2 spoilers. Enjoy!)

1. Reunions

September 1st, 1985 Hawkins, Indiana

"Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit, oh shit, oh shit!" Dustin exclaimed while he ran around his house searching for his backpack.

"Dusty, did you look behind the couch?" his mother said to him as he rushed from room to room looking for it. She was sitting on their recliner in their living room, petting Mews the 2nd. He ran past her and found it right where she said it would be. He grabbed it and slung it over his shoulder, and ran past his mom again to the door. "Have a good first day sweetums!"

"Moooom I told you not to call me that!"

"You'll always be my sweetums Dusty!"

He ran out the door, "Whatever mom. Love youuu."

Dustin ran around to the side of his old house and picked up his bike off the ground. He hopped on, throwing on his headset as he tuned it to the right frequency. He started pedaling along the road as he began to speak into the supercomm headset. "Mike, Will, Lucas, does anyone copy? I repeat, does anyone copy?"

Half an hour earlier, Byers Household

The senior boy stood at the stove cooking breakfast for his family as his mom rushed around searching for his keys as usual, while the younger freshman boy sat at the table, drawing as he often did. The smell of scrambled eggs filled the house, along with a sizzling sound from the pan, and a rustling from the mom searching for her keys.

"Jonathan, are you sure haven't seen my keys anywhere?"

The boy turned from the pan and smiled at his mom, "No mom, I haven't. Have you looked in your car?"

Joyce ran outside to check out the car while Jonathan put a plate of eggs in front of each of their spots. "So Will, are you ready for your

first day of High School?" Will had been taken over by an entity known as the Mind Flayer that resided in an alternate dimension known as the Upside Down. His mom had managed to expel the virus-like entity from him, and since then, the boy had had no more now-memories or episodes, and after a few months, it seemed like they could finally put that in the past. No more supernatural things had occurred in Hawkins since Eleven has closed the gate last November. High School would be the scariest thing he had faced since then.

He looked up from the picture he was drawing of "Will the Wise" leading his party through the Bloodstone Pass. "Um, I don't know. I guess I'm nervous, but my friends will be there too with me."

"That's the spirit buddy. Now eat up, you'll need your energy." Jonathan smiled and began eating his food as well. He was about to start his last year at Hawkins High School, and planned to go to NYU for photography at the end of the year. Unfortunately, Nancy would be going somewhere else, so this would be their last year together in the same school. He and her were still going strong after almost a year since their first romantic encounter, and he would be picking her up from the Wheeler's household before school.

The boys both finished eating as their mom came back in from outside. They were putting their plates in the sink as she walked into the kitchen.

"I finally managed to find them under the back seats of all places!" She laughed and then noticed them getting their shoes and backpacks on for school. "Oh wait don't leave without getting some pictures first!" she exclaimed, always one for mementos. Jonathan showed her his camera, as he had known she would want some first day pictures. He had Will stand in front of the door and smile, and then had his mom take a picture with him. Joyce then took a picture of the two of them. Finally they said goodbye to each other and kissed their mom on the cheek.

As they were walking out the door, Will's supercomm crackled to life, and Dustin's voice came through the speaker. "Mike, Will, Lucas, does anyone copy? I repeat, does anyone copy?"

Will grabbed the walkie talkie and ran out the door after Jonathan. "I copy Dustin."

15 minutes earlier, Sinclair household

"Finish your waffles baby, you need to be well-fed for your big first first day!"

Lucas rolled his eyes but obligingly ate his last bite of waffles from his plate. He stood up and walked over to the sink to put his plate in. He did, and then went to get his backpack from his room. He opened his door to Erica playing house with her dolls and his action figures. "House" just was them kissing mostly and arguing. He walked over to her and took his figures out of her hands.

"HEY, they were just about to get married, they're in love!"

He sighed, "No, they're not. They can't be in love because they don't have a way to even be together."

"Whatever nerd," she said whilst rolling her eyes as she left the room.

He shook his head and put the figures on his desk again. He quickly gathered his things and shoved them in his backpack. He slung his backpack over his shoulder and left his room, making sure to shut off the lights. He grabbed his new walkman and put his headphones over his ears and got ready to leave his house, but his mom stopped him to take a first day picture of course. So he removed his headphones and quickly smiled for his mother. He was about to head out the door and replace his headphones when he heard his supercomm crackle to life.

Dustin spoke first "Mike, Will, Lucas, does anyone copy? I repeat, does anyone copy?"

Then he heard Will speak, "I copy Dustin."

"I'm here too Guys. Mike, you there?"

Half an hour earlier, Wheeler household

Mike stood in front of the bathroom mirror, and brushed his fingers

through his hair to try and make it swoop the other way. He finally got it to stay but decided he liked it the other way. He finally settled on it parting down the middle, and was about to brush his teeth when someone started banging on the door.

"Mike I know you're nervous but I need to get ready too!"

It was Nancy. He quickly unlocked the door and let her in with him. She made her way over to the sink and began to brush her teeth. Mike messed with his hair again and she smirked at him. She spat out her foam and wiped her mouth off. She turned to look at Mike and smiled at him.

"You look fine Mike, and you shouldn't worry so much about how you look in front of the others at school. They don't matter."

He turned to her and frowned, "Yeah I know that, but it's not them I'm worried about."

Nancy finally understood his reason for his nerves. Mike, you don't have to worry about her. She likes you for you, and not the way you look."

He groaned and began to brush his teeth. He mumbled through the foam in his mouth, "But we haven't seen each other since the Snowball. What if she doesn't feel the same way I do anymore."

Nancy smiled and placed her hands on his shoulders. "Listen little brother. If there is one thing I know in this world, it's that you and her are meant to be. She waited 353 days for you last time, and still felt the same way. She will feel the same thing way now as well. You guys talk almost every night for hours after all. It'll be no different, except you can kiss her again this time."

Mike smiled back at her and walked out of the bathroom. He began to find his pencils and notebooks for the new school year. He put all of it in his backpack and walked downstairs to find his mom and dad and little sister all sitting at the table eating breakfast. He walked into the kitchen and put 4 Eggos into the toaster.

"So Michael, are you excited for your first day of high school?" His

mother asked him from the other room.

He opened the fridge for some juice as he responded, "Yeah I guess so. Nervous too."

"Well I'm sure that you will be just fine with your friends at your side."

Mike thought of them, as they were supposed to all be here soon, but-

The sound of a car screeching to a stop was heard from outside, and Mike froze with nervousness. He heard car doors slamming shut as the car's engine turned off. After a few seconds, the doorbell rung.

His father stood up from his chair. "Who could that be at this hour?" he asked the people around him. His mom shook her head but he quickly said that he would get it. He walked to the door, and unlocked it. He opened it and there she was.

15 minutes ago, Hopper's cabin

"Do you have all your school books?"

"Yes Papa."

"And your lunch money?"

"Yes Papa."

"And you know what to say when someone asks who you are right?"

"Yes Papa. My name is Jane, I am 14 years old, and you adopted me over the summer."

"Good girl." Hopper took her by the shoulders and gave her a hug. He was incredibly nervous about letting her out of his sight for the first time in almost two years now. While it was said she would be safe if she left now, he still couldn't help the slight feeling of dread when she left. But she needed an education, and he had taught her all he knew, along with some help from many books from the Hawkins Library. Along with that, she would finally see the boys again, and gain some more social skills.

She was dressed in some fashionable blue jeans and a pink blouse with a jean jacket over that. She was excited to see Mike but also scared about going to a... a... High school for the first time. She was also worried that Mike might not feel the same way about her anymore.

"Papa, what if Mike doesn't like me?"

He sighed. "El, of course he likes you still. He asks about you everytime I see him. He is always wondering about you. You guys talk all the time. He is head over heels for you El, I wouldn't worry about it."

She nodded and wiped away a tear that had formed and was rolling down her face. She hugged him and put her backpack on her shoulders. They walked outside and Hopper picked up her new bike he had recently gotten her for the start of school. He loaded it into the back of his police jeep and got into the front seat next to Eleven. He put the car into drive and did a U-turn onto the road and began driving towards the Wheelers.

He glanced over at El, who was looking out towards the trees through the windows. "So, uh, how do you feel about starting your first day of school ever kiddo?"

She looked at him. "I'm not sure, uh, I guess...." she trailed off, seeming to not know the word.

"Nervous?" he suggested to her.

"Yes. Nervous. I am nervous, but excited to see Mike," she responded.

Hopper reached over and tousled her hair, which was less curly and down to her shoulders now. "You'll do great today kid, don't worry about it. She gave him a grin and sat back in her seat. He turned on the radio and they drove in silence until they reached the cul de sac where Mike lived about 10 minutes later. They got out of their seats and Hopper went around back and got her bike out for her while she walked over to the front door. She reached the door and pushed the doorbell. It was a few seconds before the door opened. When it did, she saw him.

Mike.

Current time, Wheeler Household

All Mike saw was a flash of blue and pink before something crashed into him and latched on. It took him a second to realize it was Eleven, and he grasped her as tightly as he could. He could smell her hair in his face and feel her warmth all around him as they squeezed each other.

Her voice was muffled from his shoulder. "I missed you so much Mike, I counted down each day until we could see each other again."

He could feel a few tears in his eyes as they continued to hug. "I did too Eleven. I never thought I would see you again."

She finally separated a little from him, only to come back in close and give him a short but sweet kiss. He returned it, but then Hopper showed up.

He came up behind Eleven and smirked at the two teens hugging and kissing. He finally tapped her shoulder and they separated, finally realizing that the entire Wheeler family was focused on the girl who had just kissed their son. Both of their faces went bright red as they turned to face his mother and father.

"So, uh, Mike, who's your friend here?" His dad asked after a few seconds of bewilderment.

His answer came as smoothly as it could, given how many times he had practiced it, but his voice still cracked at first. "She is uh, my girlfriend, Jane. We met over the summer at the arcade and she was new here so I figured I'd invite her to come to school with me and my friends." He saw their eyes glance to Hopper. "He's her dad, she's adopted."

Eleven glanced at him, and took his hand and smiled at his parents.

"Oh, well, okay then. Why haven't you had her over yet Michael? She's just adorable!" His mom went over and shook her hand. "It's a pleasure to meet you Jane! Would you like some breakfast?"

Eleven seemed taken aback by his mother's forwardness. She

struggled to find something to say when Mike stepped in. "No mom, I made some Eggos for the both of us." He could see Eleven's eyes light up out of the corner of his eyes. "We're going to go downstairs and get ready for school"

She nodded and said, "Well okay then. It was nice meeting you Jane. Good seeing you Hopper." He nodded at her and she walked away. Eleven turned to him and gave him a hug. "I love you Papa."

He squeezed her back. "I love you too." He let go and took Mike aside. "You'll protect her today, right kid?"

He nodded fiercely. "I'll make sure nothing happens to her. We have every period together except third."

He nodded his approval. "Good kid. Have a good first day you two." He walked away back towards his jeep.

Mike took eleven by the hand and led her into the basement. He took her down the steps and showed her the feast he had laid out for them both. At least a dozen Eggos with syrup, butter, and whipped cream. She let out a squeal of delight and gave him a quick hug before she ran to the stack to begin devouring them. She looked absolutely giddy as she grabbed 4 and piled them onto a plate with shipped cream. Mike smiled at the sight and went to go sit next to her and eat some himself.

As he took two and began to butter them up, he looked over and was struck by how beautiful Eleven looked. He knew she was, but it still amazed him that she was his. He suddenly gave her a quick kiss, which she seemed surprised at first before kissing him back. They pulled apart and she started to giggle when she realized he now had some whipped cream on his face from her lips. She reached over and got it off with her finger.

As they ate their Eggos, they began to talk, asking them how they had been since they had last seen each other at the Snowball. They told stories about things that had happened to them over the last few months, like Eleven learning to read and speak much better with help from Hopper, and that one time he had torn apart the house looking for her until he realized that she was just on the porch. Mike told her

about how Lucas and Max had broken up several times and gotten back together, mostly over stupid little things, and how Will hadn't had any other symptoms since she had closed the gate.

"That was such an intense night. I remember never thinking you were coming back. I was so worried."

"I know Mike." Eleven laughed. "I thought Hopper was going to kill you when he found us sleeping in Joyce's bed together."

Mike laughed along with her. He would have much rather faced 10 more Demodogs than face Hopper telling them why it wasn't appropriate again.

10 Months earlier.

Mike paced in front of the door, waiting for the distinctive sound of Hopper's jeep to be heard. Steve, him, and the others had been back for about an hour when Will and his mother, along with Nancy and Jonathan had showed up. The boys and Max had all hugged Will when they realized he was okay. Once he had quickly fallen asleep on the couch, Joyce had told them what had occurred in the cabin. The intense heat, the black lines creeping up his neck and into his face, how he had choked her, and finally how Nancy had made the shadow monster flee from his body by stabbing him with the red-hot poker. Soon after, she had lied down with Will and fallen asleep as well.

No one went home that night. Everyone gathered blankets and slept in the Byers living room. Max and Lucas fell asleep holding hands, while Dustin had fallen asleep with his head resting on Steve's leg. Steve slept in the arm-chair, cuddling his spiked nail bat. Jonathan and Nancy had retired to his room after everyone had fallen asleep. Unknown to them, there was still one soul awake in the living room still.

Mike couldn't sleep. El and Hopper still weren't back. What if something had happened to them? What if the Demo-Dogs had gotten them? He tried to push these thoughts from his mind, but it was to no avail. Instead, after half an hour, he got up and began to pace in front of the door, waiting for them to return.

Just when he was about to give up hope, he heard car tires on gravel. The engine stopped and the sound of a door slamming shut woke up Steve and Dustin. They both leapt up, Steve with his bat at the ready. Mike told them to lie back down and go to sleep, it was nothing. Reluctantly, they did, and they were asleep within 30 seconds. Mike finally opened the door and tears filled his eyes at the sight which greeted him.

Hopper looked like a zombie walking towards the door, but that was nothing to how Eleven looked. Her face was gray and older looking. Dried blood covered her nose and lips, and even more covered the sides of her faces from her ears. He ran out to them. "Is... is she-" he wavered, trying to get the words out.

Hopper sighed, "No kid, she's just worn out. Get the door for me will you? We'll put her on Joyce's bed. Mike quickly obliged, opening both doors. Hopper slid in as quietly as he could, setting her down on the bed. Mike stood opposite from him on the other side and they both took one of her hands.

Mike looked at the blood again and got an idea. He went into the bathroom and got a washcloth and made it damp before bringing it back to the room with him. In the short few minutes he had been gone, Hopper had fallen asleep in an armchair in the living room. He was holding what looked to be crackers from the kitchen. Mike quietly walked into Joyce's room and set about trying to get the blood off of her face as gently as possible. He didn't want to wake her. He started on the left side of her face and then moved to her lips and nose. He was just about to start on the right side of her face when an arm grabbed him, startling him.

"Mi-Mike?" a tiny and tired voice sounded from beneath him.

He startled. He hadn't meant to wake her up. "El, I'm sorry I just wanted to get the blood off your face. I'll let you sleep now." He turned to walk out but she held on even tighter.

"Stay."

He looked at her and turned back around. He finished cleaning the blood off of her face as best he could before putting the rag down on

the bedside table. She still had her eyes weakly opened and looking at him. He wasn't sure what to do now, but she limply touched the empty space next to her. He thought about what the others might say, but in the end he didn't care. He hadn't seen her for 353 days, and he only wanted to be with her. He took off his shoes and gently laid down next to her. She turned and hugged him with her arms. It startled him to see how weak she was. He grasped her back. "I missed you. I missed you so much El. For those first few months I had no idea what to do. I slept in your fort every night, just hoping you would reappear."

"I missed you a lot too Mike. I came to your house as soon as I got out of the Upside Down, but the bad men were there, so I ran. And then Hopper found me and I looked for you as soon as I could."

Their faces were only a hand's width apart, and that was still too much. She closed the gap between them and gently pressed her lips against his for a few seconds before parting. Her eyes were almost closed, and he knew she was almost asleep.

She thought of a TV show she had watched on the TV in Hopper's cabin. It was about a man and a woman who liked each other, and she thought of something they said to each other often.

"I love you, Mike."

He seemed to freeze a little before relaxing again. The last words she heard before falling asleep were, "I love you too, Eleven."

Hopper had been furious when he had walked in on them asleep in the same bed, but to his credit he didn't wake them up. He just gave them a stern talking to when they had woken up, saying that he knew they wouldn't have done anything but to ask because in most cases it wouldn't be appropriate. He was a little lenient with them, especially with what they had been through the day before.

Mike couldn't have cared less though. That was the best sleep he had had in 353 days. And he didn't know it, but Eleven felt the same way.

Present

They both laughed as they finished recounting that night's events and mimicking Hopper's face they thought he would have made when he saw them. As their laughter trailed off and they finished their Eggos, Mike became somber. "And then you had to leave again," he said. "And I didn't ever think I'd see you again."

Eleven took his hand. "Mike, I promised you I wouldn't leave again, and friends don't lie."

"I know El, I know. It was hard knowing you were out there but we couldn't see each other."

A thought popped into Eleven's head. "Mike, what is a, a girl-friend.?" she said, saying the two as if they were separate words.

"What?" he seemed confused.

"Earlier, to you mother, you called me a girl-friend."

"Oh, um, a girlfriend is what you are to me, and I'm your boyfriend I guess."

"Boy-friend?"

"Yeah, like, we're friends right?"

"Yes Mike."

"And we like each other too?"

She seemed to be understanding, or at least he thought. "Yes."

"So we're friends but we also like each other, meaning we are boyfriend and girlfriend."

We hold each others hands and kiss each other, but no one else, except our family, I guess. It's called dating."

"So, Dustin is my friend, but I do not like him like I like you, so he is not my boyfriend,

even though he is a boy who is my friend?"

Mike smiled and held out his hand for a high five, "exactly El, good job!" To his

bewilderment, she seemed to recoil from his hand. Only then did Mike realize what the problem was. He didn't know every detail of what had happened to her in the lab, but he knew she was locked in solitary confinement when she didn't comply with the orders she was given. It wasn't that far of a stretch that she could have been abused while she had been kept there. He immediately regretted his actions.

He quickly withdrew his hand. "Oh, El, I'm such an idiot, I wasn't thinking." He tentatively reached out to touch her hand, and when she didn't recoil, he assumed that it was okay. "I'm so sorry."

She quickly took his hand in hers. "No, Mike, it's okay. I know you would never hurt me. What were you going to do?"

He took his hand again and slowly raised it. "Here, take your hand and hit it against mine." She then slapped his hand. Hard. he winced and took her hand. "No, more like this," he said as he showed her the proper motion for a high five. "And this is a fist bump." he added, showing her the motion for that as well.

She practiced them a few times, slowly gaining speed with each consecutive practice. After about five times of each, she asked him what they were for. He explained that people did them when something cool happened, or they were happy. For an example, he said that when she had made Troy pee himself, that would have deserved a high five.

They took their plates upstairs and were getting their things together for school when Mike's supercomm crackled to life.

Dustin spoke first "Mike, Will, Lucas, does anyone copy? I repeat, does anyone copy?"

Then he heard Will speak, "I copy Dustin."

"I'm here too Guys." That was Lucas. "Mike, you there?"

Mike picked it up and turned it on. "I copy guys, and guess who is here with me?" He glanced over at El and smiled.

"I can't wait to see her Mike!" That was Dustin. "Are we meeting at Elm and Cherry?"

"Sounds good, see you guys in a few." Will clicked off.

"Alright, see you then." And Lucas was off.

Mike clicked the transmission button. "See you guys soon." He put the antenna down and put on his shoes while El did the same. He looked over at her as they stood up. "You ready Eleven?"

She nodded, with a look of fierce determination on her face. Hand in hand, they stepped out the door, ready to face whatever dangers high school posed. They knew they would get through it, together.

2. Friends and Enemies

"There it is fellas. Hawkins High School." Dustin said as they put their bikes into the rack in the parking lot. He grinned." You'll never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy." he said, impersonating Ben Kenobi from *Star Wars*. Everyone laughed, but they all noticed that Eleven had a confused look on her face.

"What is a, "Star Wars?" she asked with a puzzled look on her face.

Everyone was bewildered at the fact she didn't know what *Star Wars* was. Dustin finally spoke up. "Wait, El, do you mean to tell us you've never seen the movie *Star Wars*?" She shook her head no. "Alright that settles it then. Mike, us 5 are having a sleepover at your place on friday, and we are going to watch all of them in a row, and teach her how to play D&D." Everyone nodded in agreement enthusiastically.

"Mike," Eleven piped up from behind him. "What is a sleep-over?"

"Oh, it's when you and your friends all stay over at someone's house and stay up late and talk and watch movies and eat junk food and play games. It's super fun. You need to ask Hopper about it first though."

Will added, "And if he says no, tell me and I'll get my mom to convince him. It'll be so much fun!"

Eleven still wasn't sure what the point of a "Sleep-over" was, but she could understand that the boys around her were overjoyed at the idea, and she felt her heart swell with happiness. Her eyes got teary and she drew them all into a hug. "Friends," was all she said for an explanation. And that was good enough for the boys.

Eventually, they let go of each other and walked into the school. Mike and Eleven had Algebra with Ms. Polonski, then all five of them had Science. It was supposedly a new teacher, and then they all split up for third period, then lunch, then Gym class, and then they all had English together.

Algebra was pretty uneventful for the most part. Ms. Polonski was

nice enough, and she had been very nice to El, as she was the new student this year. Thankfully her hair wasn't actually blonde or else Troy or anyone else that had seen her two years ago might have recognized her.

They all met up in the hallway near the science room, and as they walked to class they talked about their first period. Apparently the math teacher Lucas, Dustin and Will had was a real asshole. He had already assigned homework and told them their first test was Friday. They were very jealous of Mike and Eleven's teacher, as she had told them the first unit would take at least a week and half, and to not expect a test until then.

They were still grumbling as they walked into science and saw... Mr. Clarke?

He grinned at them. "Well boys, from your surprised faces I guess you haven't heard. I'm

happy to announce that I'll be continuing to teach you four in your curiosity voyage!" He then finally seemed to notice Eleven holding Mike's hand. "Or, I guess you five. And what's your name dear?"

Eleven reached to shake his hand like Hopper had taught her to do. "Jane."

"Oh, and such nice manners too. Did you just move here?"

Eleven answered like she had a thousand times before. Which she probably had done

during her practice with Hopper. "No, Chief Hopper adopted me over the summer and I'm just starting here now."

"Oh, well I'm glad you made friends with these boys so fast. They are some of the

smartest kids in the school, and most kind."
She glanced at them. "Yes, yes they are."

Science class was also uneventful. Troy sat in the back and couldn't answer a single question Mr. Clarke had. The boys at times still fought to see who could answer his pre-test questions faster, and

Eleven surprised everyone by answering a few even the boys didn't know. Her tutoring sessions with Hopper must've been more thorough than anyone believed possible. After class had ended, they formally inducted Eleven into the Hawkins High School AV Club.

"Alright guys, I promised Max I'd go and meet her for woodshop." Lucas said before leaving the classroom and waving.

The rest of them left the classroom and walked through the hallways, each of them breaking off as they reached their respective classrooms. Finally, it was just Mike and El alone, and as they came to her classroom, she hugged him tight. "I'll see you in the lunchroom Mike, bye."

"I'll see you then El."

Eleven walked into her History class and sat down in the first vacant seat she could find, slightly near the back of the classroom but more towards the middle than not. There was a group of girls sitting next to her, and when she sat down, they looked at her but didn't say anything. They just started whispering and she thought nothing of it.

History was uneventful. They went over the class syllabus and what they would be studying throughout the year. The World Wars, American History, that sort of stuff. Finally the bell rang and she hurried to gather her things and put them into her backpack, as he was excited to see Mike. She swung her backpack around her shoulder and turned to leave but ran into the group of girls from earlier. "Oh, sorry. I didn't see you." She tried to get around them but the girl who appeared to be the ringleader stepped into her path again. Eleven looked up in bewilderment at this.

"So, you're the new girl here, "she sneered. "Who bought you that outfit?"

Eleven still didn't realize what was happening. "Oh, um, my dad did. His name is Hopper. Maybe you know him!" she smiled at them.

The girls laughed. "Don't you know those are so like 5 years ago? Where'd he get them? Goodwill?"

"Yes, I think so." she smiled again. "Now can I please get past? I need to get to my friends."

They all kept laughing, which was starting to confuse her. "Don't you know they look ridiculous, and your dad is the chief? You know he's a drunk and a drug addict right?"

Eleven started to tear up. "You obviously don't know my dad. He is a great papa to me. And all my friends said I looked nice."

The girl on the ringleader's left spoke up. "And who are your friends exactly?"

"Lucas Sinclair, Dustin Henderson, Will Byers, and Mike Wheeler. He's my boyfriend."

"Oh darling, those are all a bunch of weirdos. You know that right? But even so, you have a boyfriend? I'm sorry but you're not pretty enough for even weirdos to like you. Have a nice first day darling." The trio of girls left, and Eleven stayed where she was standing, tears quickly filling her eyes. Why had they been so mean to her? She had endured torture for failing to comply in the lab, but this was different. These were normal girls in a normal school. She quickly left the classroom at that point and walked into a courtyard area outside. She sat down at a table and began to sob as silently as she could. She had thought she was pretty, and that her friends were good ones. She still believed they were, but why would anyone say such mean things to her?

Lunchroom, Hawkins High School

Will walked into the enormous lunchroom. It was at least double the size of the one at Hawkins Middle. It was filled with a dull roar from the several hundred kids sitting around eating their lunches. He went through the lunch line as fast as he could, and then began to search out the rest of his friends. He wished he could get somewhere higher, as he was too short to see over many of the other student's heads.

"Hey Byers! Over here!" He looked around and saw Lucas waving him over. He was sitting with Mike, Max, and Dustin. He didn't see Eleven, so she must've been still finding her way to the lunchroom. It

was a confusing school to navigate, that's for sure. He made his way over to the table and sat down. The rest of them were already horsing around. Max and Lucas were making jokes and playfully insulting Dustin while he fired back with insults of his own. Mike was laughing at them and Will joined in with him. They began insulting them as well and it sooned turned into a full on battle between Mike, Dustin, and Will versus Max and Lucas. In the end, they considered it a tie as they were all laughing too hard to continue with the play fighting.

When they stopped laughing, they realized that Eleven still hadn't shown up, and that the lunch line had ended, meaning she had either gotten her lunch and not been able to find them, or that she hadn't found the lunch room at all. Mike stood up and looked around for her roaming the lunchroom possible, but he saw no one that looked like her. He began to get worried. "Guys, what if someone noticed her and she got taken again?"

Dustin, always the voice of reason in the party, spoke up first "I wouldn't worry Mike. It's a big school, and she never even went to a small school, so she probably just got lost."

"Look, there's Mr. Clarke. Let's go ask him if we can leave early and go look for her."

They all quickly finished their lunches and strode over to the teacher.

Mike spoke before anyone else had a chance, "Hi Mr. Clarke. I was wondering if we could leave early and go look for Ele- Jane. She hasn't come to lunch and we think she might be lost."

He nodded in understanding. "It is a big school after all. Just don't be late to your next period!" he called after them as they had already run off in search of Eleven.

They walked out of the cafeteria and into the main lobby. On their right was the administrative offices and to their left and behind them were hallways leading to the math and science and history and english wings respectively.

"Alright, Lucas and Max, you two search the english wing, Dustin you take history, Will, you go look in the science wing, and I'll look around the math wing." They all nodded and ran off in their

respective directions they need to go.

Max and Lucas went from classroom to classroom looking in through the windows for any sign of Eleven. They roamed through the hallways. Unfortunately, they couldn't call out for her because some teachers were still having classes. They got to end of the hallway and reached the gym where Max and Eleven had had their first interaction. Well, it hadn't exactly been an interaction, Eleven had just thrown Max off her skateboard when she had been talking to Mike and she believed that they had been "flirting" as Mike had called it when he had explained what they were doing the day after she had closed the gate. When they had all woken up and had breakfast, Max had finally asked why Eleven didn't like her. She had explained that she saw her and Mike together in the gym. Mike had taken her off to another room and had explained that they had just been talking. Just because she was a girl, he didn't feel the same way about her as he did about her. Eleven had then gone out and had given Max an apology, and the two had seemed to reconcile. At the Snowball, they had chatted about girly things, even though El didn't know most of them.

They checked out the gym and the bathrooms and hadn't found her, so they began to walk back over to the lobby. Over in the history wing, Dustin was having no more luck than Max and Lucas, he had checked all of the classrooms, even walking into the teacher lounge by accident. He finally checked the bathrooms, even calling into the girls one. Nancy walked out a few seconds later and gave him a strange look as to ask what he was doing. "We can't find Eleven, she's missing."

She nodded and wished him good luck before continuing back to class. He gave up before walking back towards the main lobby. In the meantime, Will had found nothing as well. He saw Mr. Clarke again and asked if he had seen or heard Jane anywhere, and he had said no. He reached the end of the hallway and sighed before turning back to meet up with Max and the guys again.

Mike had searched through the entire math wing, and had found... nothing. He hoped that one of the others had found her, as he was getting worried. He was walking back through the hallway when he passed by a door that led to one of the outside courtyards that was

empty at this time of day. He glanced outside and walked past it before doubling back. There was Eleven sitting at one of the metal tables. He had no idea what she would be doing out there, but that wasn't the point. He walked outside and then as he got closer, he began to see her shoulders shaking and began to hear soft sobs coming from her. He ran over to her and sat down next to her, putting his arm around her. She leaned her head into his shoulder and flung her arms around him as she cried.

He finally spoke up when her crying started to slow down. "El, what's wrong? Why are you crying?"

She looked up at him with her big brown eyes filled with tears. "Some girls at the end of my math class stopped me and told me I looked ugly in my clothes. And then they all laughed at me and told me you and the others were weird, and that you wouldn't love me because I was too ugly." She began to sob even harder, and leaned into his arm once more.

Mike was heartbroken. Her first day and it had been ruined by a bunch of stupid girls. He even could guess who it was. Claudia Nadine and her two friends Julia Whipper and Hannah Ripley. They were the most popular girls in the school, or so he had heard from Nancy. She had told them they constantly put other girls down, most likely to boost their own self-esteem. Mike knew what she had told Eleven wasn't true, but she had never really dealt with other teens other than him and the boys, so the criticisms hit her a lot harder. He just held onto her while she cried.

Once she began to slow down again, he tilted her head up to look at her. "Listen El, that girl who told you those things, she just an asshole that feels the need to make other people feel bad about themselves."

"Asshole?"

He smiled at her, she was so innocent in some ways, but had also committed murder on the other hand. "A mouth breather, and don't repeat that word around Hopper or any adults, it's called a swear word. At the sleepover we'll tell you about them. "

"And watch *Star Wars*?"

"Yes, we'll watch that too. "

"Mike, you think I'm pretty right?"

He leaned down to kiss her. When he came back up, he said "Yes, El, I really do think you are the prettiest girl I have ever seen."

She smiled at him, "I don't think you or our friends are weirdos either."

He laughed, "No, all 5 of us are weirdo nerds, but that is the best kind of person to be."

She hugged him and wiped her eyes off. "Thank you Mike. I feel much better now. And I have an idea." She had a grin on her face that looked very devious.

He raised an eyebrow. "And what is that?"

"Remember when I made that boy pee himself two years ago?"

The same devious grin formed on his face as he realized what she was thinking.

They met up with the other 4 in the lobby, and when they had asked Mike where he had found Eleven, they had told the others what had happened, and they were all furious. Max had also had an encounter with them earlier in the day, so she told her she knew how she felt. They then told the others their plan, and they all agreed that it was the right course of action to take.

They all went to their last period of the day together and painfully sat through the hour, counting down the minutes until they could enact their mischievous little plan. The teacher, while nice, was paid no attention as they all whispered back and forth, fine tuning the details. They would have to do it either in the lobby or parking lot, as that was how the most people would see it happen. Finally, they were told to pack up, and as soon as the bell rang, they all were the first ones out the door as they ran to find Claudia.

After a few minutes of searching, they found her and her two lackeys hanging out by the vending machines, even better, she was talking to

Harry Springs, who she adored. They all got close enough to see the action unfold, but far enough away that they wouldn't be noticed. As they all got into positions around the room, Mike nodded at El, and she started staring at the girl, her face slightly contorting as she channeled her powers towards the girl.

At first nothing happened, but then the girl froze and everyone looked at her strangely before a slight hissing sound was heard. Her pants were getting darker by the second as her bladder emptied itself against her will. Everyone was laughing and pointing at her, and Mike and the rest of them were high fiving as El worked her magic. Finally, the girl seemed empty, but Eleven didn't stop there. All of a sudden, the girl bent over, and the people standing next to her jumped even further away as a horrible stench filled the air. Everyone realized what was happening, and while some covered their noses and ran away, everyone else started laughing even harder at the girl. Finally, Eleven let go, and her, Max, and the boys all ran to their bikes, Max hopped on her board and started pushing alongside them.

After several minutes, their laughter settled down. "I can't believe that she made her shit himself!" Lucas exclaimed, chuckling.

Eleven looked at him strangely. "I made her poop herself, not shit herself. Shit is something Hopper says when he is mad at me." Everyone laughed at this. "Yes, that is another one of those bad words I told you about." Mike explained. "It can be used like 'Oh shit, I forgot to clean my room' or as 'Oh, she shit herself' in the place of the word poop."

She nodded in understanding, and they peddled along, giggling at the faces Claudia had made. They all went to Mike's house and went downstairs to plan out their sleepover for Friday. Who would bring what snacks, who would rent the movies, etcetera, etcetera. Mike would get the movies and make sure everything was set up, Dustin would get all the best snacks with some help from Will. Lucas and Max would bring their happy little selves, along with extra pillows. Eleven's only goal was to get Hopper's approval to sleep over. Since it would be everyone and not just Mike, that would most likely help. And Joyce could always convince him.

After an hour, Hopper showed up to pick Eleven up. She hugged each other then goodbye, and gave Mike a kiss on the cheek. She walked outside and pushed her bike to the car. When she reached it, Hopper swept her into a hug. "So kid, how your first day?"

She smiled. "It was good Papa! I met all my teachers and everyone seemed friendly, but these three girls were mean to me." She could see his face grow dark. "But don't worry, Mike comforted me and made me feel way better. So it was a great day!"

His face softened and he smiled. "Well that's great to hear. I was thinking we could get some takeout for dinner and watch a movie, and maybe have some Eggo's for dessert?"

She nodded and said that sounded good, and she hopped into the passenger seat. Hopper turned on some music and put the car in gear, and they were off. She leaned her head out the window and let the wind hit her face. She realized it would be better to get it over with sooner rather than later. She turned to Hopper. "Papa, today Max and the boys asked me if I wanted to join them for a 'Sleep-over' on Friday. They wanted me to watch *Star Wars* with them."

He frowned. "I don't know kid. A sleepover with Mike?"

"And everyone else. Mike is getting the movies, Dustin and Lucas are getting pillows, and Will and Max are getting some pillows and blankets. Why are you so worried about me and Mike sleeping in the same place anyways?"

He let out a little chuckle, "That will be a talk for when you are older kid. I guess maybe to celebrate you being allowed to go out in the world again, you can stay over. But you are not allowed to leave Mike's house. Understand?"

She nodded fiercely and gave him a quick hug. "Thank you! Thank you! Now I won't have to get Joyce to convince you. That makes it easier."

"Yeah, she would've forced me to. That woman is a force to be reckoned with."

3. The Sleepover

The rest of the week passed without incident. Claudia was absent from school until Friday, and when she finally showed up, no one recognized her until 4th period due to her wearing a large hoodie covering her face. Everyone had a good rest of the week, and even Will, Dustin, and Lucas had warmed up to their math teacher, as he was kinda a geek underneath his rough exterior. Not to their level or Mr. Clarke's, but he could still get and even make some references to popular sci-fi flicks.

Finally, the day came for Operation TETBSE, which stood for Throw Eleven The Best Sleepover Ever. They had planned to shorten the name, but had never gotten around to it. They had all been looking forward to it, as while they had had several sleepovers since last year, Eleven obviously hadn't been to any of them, and even though she had sleep in Mike's basement for a week when they had first met her, that didn't really count.

After school on Friday, Max and Lucas skateboarded and biked respectively over to her house to grab her stuff and get some pillows and blankets to make a pillow fort to end all pillow forts. They shoved them into some bags and were getting ready to leave when Billy walked in. Lucas froze and stood still as Billy eyed him up and down. As impossible as it may have seemed, this was the first time he had seen him face to face since he had nearly beaten Steve to death and Max had drugged him. He tensed and got ready to run.

"Hey Max." was all he said before he walked into the living room and sat down in front of the TV. Lucas was bewildered. He had been expecting anything but that. He gave a look to max and she gestured outside. They slung the bags around their shoulders and walked out the door.

Lucas turned to her. "What was that? I was expecting to get beaten or killed but he acted like nothing had happened."

She shrugged. "I know, it's extremely odd. Ever since I drugged him that night he's acted like a sad little puppy all the time. He still acts cool with girls and all but anytime at home he has no bite or bark

anymore. It's like he knows he can't abuse me anymore."

"Well, I guess that's a good thing for you at least."

"Yeah, it certainly makes things easier in my life."

"Alright, let's get to Mike's and get Operation TETBSE started!" They hopped on their respective vehicles and rode away.

Over at Dustin's house he and Will were raiding the pantry for cookies, popcorn, chips, and candy bars of all assorted kinds to give El a taste of all of their favorite snacks. They raided the fridge for as much soda they could carry in their bags, and emptied out Dustin's piggy bank so they could order Pizza. And already at Mike's were Eggos for breakfast the next morning. They got all their goodies together along with their sleeping bags and pillows and started to bike over to the Wheeler household.

Eleven had been dropped off around 4 by Hopper. He had pulled Mike aside and given him the "dad talk" as he called it. Basically, no funny business was to happen with his daughter.

After that awkward talk, they began to were setup things in the basement. They moved the TV in front of where the pillow fort would be, and started setting up chairs to drape the blankets over. They started near her old pillow fort, which amazingly was still standing and would serve as the base for the rest of the fort. He and Eleven would also be sleeping in it most likely, as they still were making up for almost two years away from each other. It had taken some time for El to get the hang of putting the blankets in the right place to make them stay with the clamps he had taken from his Dad's workshop. But after a few minutes, they were on their way to making pretty much the best pillow fort in the history of pillow forts. And when the others got here, the fort would cover the entire basement.

They did as much as they could, and by that point, the others would be here soon. They walked upstairs as Mike's mom walked in the the kitchen door. "Hi Mike, and hello Jane! I got the movies you wanted. Jane, I have no idea why you would want to watch these geeky movies with those boys."

Mike rolled his eyes at his mom's comments. El politely smiled, "I like

geeky stuff too."

Karen laughed, "Well I guess you're the perfect girl for Mike then dear."

Mike smiled and looked at El. "Yeah, she is."

They intertwined their hands and grabbed the movies from his mom. "Thanks, and can you send the others down when they get here?"

"Sure thing Michael."

They walked back into the basement and sat down on the couch. He began to explain the basics of *Star Wars*, so she wouldn't have that many questions when they began watching them. He showed her Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa, Han Solo, Chewbacca, and Darth Vader, and pointed them out on the covers of the VHS tapes. He told her the basics of each character, such as Leia being a princess and Darth Vader being an evil sith lord. He told her that he and Luke Skywalker had powers that were not unlike hers. While they had never made anyone pee themselves, they did use them to move objects and in the case of Darth Vader, hurt people. When he said that, her face seemed to fall, as she thought she sounded more like Vader than Luke.

Mike seemed to notice this, and understood. "El, he hurts people because he's evil and likes to do it. You have only hurt people to save me or my friends. You do it in the name of good and not evil."

She looked over at him. "Promise?"

"Promise."

She leaned her head on his shoulder as he continued explaining the basic details. Anytime she was with him she had this feeling in her chest. It was warm and enveloping, and she liked the feeling, even though she didn't know what it was. She made a mental note to ask Mike about it later, and if he had felt it too. But for now, she was content to cuddle with him as he geeked out over a droid, whatever that is, called C-3PO.

After about ten minutes, they heard several sets of feet running down the steps. A few seconds later, Dustin and Will appeared in the

basement. "Aww, they're so cute together!" El giggled as Mike's face turned a deep red. He looked up at them but kept her head on his shoulder. "Yeah, I guess we are." And then she turned and kissed her.

Dustin and Will groaned as the two separated and smiled at each other. "Come on guys, we need to add our stuff to this fort and then show you all the snacks we brought!" Mike and El hopped up off the couch and moved over to their bags. They pulled out 3 pillows and 4 blankets. With them, they added to the right side of the fort, and when they were finished, it nearly covered the entire basement, excluding the steps and the area around them. They then pulled out the dozens of snacks they had brought, along with a few Mike had. "We wanted her to taste all of the best snacks and our personal favorites. We couldn't decide on just a few, so we brought them all!" Dustin said with a smile.

"We have Pringles, Cheetos, Doritos, Fritos, beef jerky, Oreos, Nilla Wafers, Mike and Ikes, 3 Musketeers, Snickers, Kit Kats, and many many more."

She smiled, but her face fell suddenly. "Eggos?"

They all laughed. "Yes El, we have Eggos too for breakfast, or maybe even tonight if we are feeling crazy."

She nodded in approval. It was now 6 PM, and Lucas and Max hadn't shown up yet, so for the meantime, they began to make Eleven's character for Dungeons and Dragons. Eleven the Enchanter was chosen as her character's name, and they began to teach her the most basic rules, such as how the basic gameplay mechanics worked.

After another 15 minutes, they all heard the door upstairs open, and in a few seconds more, Lucas and Max were sitting downstairs around the table, delving deep into the different enemies and things you could do in the game. Which was pretty much anything. They talked about how Mike was the dungeon master, which meant he made the campaigns. The four of them told Max and Eleven about the longest campaign they had ever done, which had lasted 2 days almost straight, with only short breaks for sleeping a few hours.

After the *lengthy* explanation, about an hour and a half had passed,

and it was almost 8 PM. They decided if they wanted to do anything else that night they should start to watch the movies now, as they would finish them around 2 AM. Mike and Dustin went upstairs to pop some popcorn and bring down all the sodas. Will and Lucas put in the VHS tape for the first movie, and Eleven and Max got comfy in the pile of pillows and blankets underneath the canopy of blankets above them. Dustin and Mike came downstairs and turned off the lights. Mike lied down next to El and she cuddled up next to him, and Lucas and Max did the same. Will and Dustin both grabbed as many snacks as they could carry and carried them into the fort. Dustin pushed the play button and the opening crawl for *Star Wars* began. Eleven was mesmerized by the huge Star Destroyer coming into view. When Darth Vader walked onto screen, she sat up and began leaning towards the screen.

When Luke Skywalker was shown for the first time, Eleven turned to Mike and smiled, "I'm like him!"

"Yes El, you are." He said as she leaned back into his shoulder. They watched on, and talked about their favorite characters as they watched. Mike and El's was Luke Skywalker, Dustin's was Princess Leia, Max liked Darth Vader, and Lucas and Will's was Han Solo. Eleven liked it when the stormtrooper hit his head, and she audibly gasped when Ben Kenobi was struck down and disappeared into the Force. They all cheered as the Death Star was blown up by Luke Skywalker. El began to clap when the medal ceremony started, much to the amusement of everyone else.

The credits began to roll, and everyone took a quick 5 minute break to go to the bathroom and re-supply with popcorn and drinks. Eleven had just tried Twizzlers, and they were her favorite candy she had tried so far. As everyone settled back in, Dustin said, "El, if you thought that one was good, *Empire Strikes Back* is even better."

She grinned at him excitedly, "Oh I can't wait!"

Lucas raised his eyebrow. "*Return of the Jedi* is wayyyy better."

"No."

"Yes."

"Nooooo."

"Yessss."

"NO."

"YES."

"GUYS!" Mike yelled. "We'll watch it and then El can decide which she likes better."

They both nodded in agreement and Eleven was almost bouncing with excitement as she snuggled back up to Mike to watch the next installment. She awed at the Star Destroyers grouped up, and was quiet until Luke was attacked by the Wampa. When it appeared and swiped at his face with a mighty roar, she gripped Mike's arm and let out a small squeal. They watched through the Battle of Hoth, and Max let out little cheer as Darth Vader entered the Rebel base. Eventually, Luke and Yoda began to train, and these scenes especially interested Eleven, as she was finally seeing immense use of the force, such as when Yoda lifted the X-Wing out of the swamp.

Finally, the boys and Max's favorite part began. The battle between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. They all knew what was coming, but El had no idea. She gasped in shock when Luke's hand was cut off, and was completely speechless when Vader was revealed to be his father. She was completely transfixed on the TV as the movie ended, and Mike could see a single tear rolling down her face. "Let's start the next one right now!" she called out to them.

Lucas laughed, "Hold on a second El, I have to pee."

"Me too." Mike agreed.

She huffed and sat down and tried a Twix bar while everyone took care of their needs. After a few minutes, she was getting antsy, but thankfully everyone was getting back together and lying back down for the last installment, *Return of the Jedi*. This was Mike and Lucas's favorite. Dustin inserted the VHS tape and pressed play. They had to wait some more minutes as the person who had rented the movie before forgot to rewind it. Finally, it began from the beginning. El

loved the different creatures found in Jabba's palace. All of the boys swooned over Princess Leia in her slave outfit, and even El and Max had to admit she was very attractive.

They watched on, Eleven gasping and aweing at the spectacle on the screen as they rescued Han and went back to the fleet. When Yoda died, she let out a single small sob, and when Ben revealed that Luke and Leia were twins, she let out the biggest "What the hell?" sound of the night. An hour and half passed, and they reached the final battle of the series. Luke and Vader's fight was much more intense than the last, and Eleven was loving every minute of it. The space combat was intense, and everyone cheered as the Super Star Destroyer crashed down into the Death Star. The room was filled with cheers as the Emperor was defeated by Vader as he was turned to the light side once more.

The room was silent as Vader was unmasked by his son and they shared their final words together. Dustin would never admit it, but he had a few tears slide down his face. Eleven gripped Mike's hand as Luke narrowly escaped the Death Star. Vader was put to rest on the funeral pyre. Everyone got up and cheered and danced as the Rebels celebrated their victory. Well, Eleven did, and then Mike joined her, and in a few seconds, everyone had joined them.

"Guys, they were so good!" Eleven exclaimed as the credits rolled.

"So, which one was your favorite?" Dustin and Lucas asked in unison.

"Well, Empire was really really good, but I think Jedi is my favorite. It had a nice and happy ending!"

Lucas cheered and high-fived her as Dustin groaned. "Well, even though you are wrong, I'll respect your decision."

It was around 2 AM at this point, but no one was feeling tired at this point due to the excitement they were all still feeling. They were all thinking of some ideas of what they could do when Max spoke up.

"What if we did truth or dare?"

"Oh that could be fun, El have you ever played before?" Mike asked.

She shook her head. "What is, Truth-or-dare?" Even after almost 2 years of learning words and how to speak, she still said multiple word phrases as if they were separate words.

"Truth or dare is a game. You choose to do a truth, and someone will give you a question you must answer truthfully, or you choose dare, and then you have to do something the others tell you."

"Okay, Truth-or-dare sounds like fun."

They all got into a circle in the middle of the fort. They did rock-paper-scissors to decide the order, and it was determined that Mike would have to go first. He chose dare.

After some consulting between the others, Lucas turned to him and said, "We dare you to let us draw something on your face!"

Mike groaned but he accepted the dare. Dustin found a black marker, and El drew glasses and a mustache on his face. The rest of the group looked at each other, as they had had some other ideas in mind. But Eleven was very pleased with herself and giggled at the way Mike looked. After that was over with, it was now El's turn. She chose truth.

"Alright Eleven, if you could have any other superpower, what would it be?" Normally, this question would have been completely hypothetical, but she El actually had telekinesis, it seemed a good one to ask her.

After a few seconds, she answered. "I would want to be invisible, so I could sneak around and not be seen."

They all thought this was a pretty good answer. They continued going around the circle, each of them doing several dares and truths each. They found Max had once given a boy a black eye when she was 6 for trying to kiss her. Dustin and Lucas did a joint dare where they both had to kiss each others feet. El was dared to kiss Will, but as soon as she heard the word kiss, she had leaned over to kiss Mike. When they had separated and she had heard the rest of the question, she turned bright red and quickly leaned over to kiss Will's cheek.

When they asked Will about the most awkward thing he'd ever seen, he told them the time he had walked in on Nancy and Jonathan

together in bed. Eleven didn't really get why this was so funny to the others, but it must have been, as they were almost rolling on the floor laughing. Mike had to go into the cul de sac and yell for 5 seconds straight, at which point a neighbor had woken up and thrown on their lights. El was dared to move a car onto a roof, and she did, much to the delight of the others.

Dustin told them about the time he had peed himself on the playground when he was 7 years old at his old school. Max chimed in and one-upped him by telling them about the time she had peed herself when she was 11 years old. Lucas was then dared to eat a spoonful of ketchup, which he did with much choking and gagging.

Finally, after about an hour of Truth or Dare, Will had fallen asleep on the couch, and everyone else was feeling pretty tired themselves. Max and Lucas lied down somewhere near the middle of the fort and fell asleep holding hands, which Dustin laughed at before falling asleep himself with a bunch of twizzlers in his hand. Mike and Eleven both crawled over to her original fort at the back and they both lied down with their heads and bodies facing each other. Eleven got up quickly and went to the bathroom, and when she returned, she was wearing these adorable pink PJs with stars on them. She lied back down and her and Mike held each other.

"This sleep-over was very fun Mike, thank you for having me over."

He laughed quietly, "Well we had it specifically for you El, thanks for coming."

They were silent for a few moments, before she spoke up again, "You know, I never thought I'd see you again. And we've been together only 5 days but it feels like forever."

He brushed away a strand of hair from her cheek. "Yeah, I know." Her eyes were almost closed from tiredness. "I'm happy Mike. I'm happy we are together again and forever now."

"I love you Eleven."
She smiled, "I know."

They snuggled closer and kissed each other goodnight and fell into a

blissful sleep.

Everyone thought that they could finally live normal lives now. They all thought they

could go on and forget about the Upside Down and the Mind Flayer. The lab was shut down and the Gate was closed. Unfortunately, they were all about to be proved wrong.

4. The Dream

Eleven woke up in a cold and dark room. The air smelled and tasted metallic. She wasn't dressed in her Pink PJs anymore either. Her feet were bare and she was now wearing a black gown of some sort. She felt different too, and when she stood up she realized why. She was now certainly taller, and everything felt too big for her normal body. What really confused her is when the body began to move to the sink, without her telling anything to do that. After a few seconds, she realized this was a dream of some sort, and not from her point of view. The cold tiles felt familiar in a weird way as the body stepped over to the sink. She ran cold water into the basin and splashed some onto her face to wake herself up. Today was important, although Eleven didn't know why she knew that.

Lights flipped on, blinding her. The body's arms snapped to attention as its sides as they straightened in attention. Several men came into the room armed with machine guns aimed directly at her. Eleven instantly felt afraid for her life, although her body didn't react in fear at all. It even yawned widely as the soldiers formed around her. She walked though the path at the soldiers had formed, and as she walked out the door, Eleven finally realized where she was. It was the Lab she had grown up in for the first 12 years of her life or so.

It had been months since she had such a vivid flashback dream to her past in the lab. But this one was different. All of her flashbacks were usually from her point of view, and she was her normal self and height. They also were always flashback dreams to past events that had happened to her, and she was almost sure this had never happened to her. She thought that this was possibly just a dream set in the lab, even though it seemed so realistic. Could this be a different person in a different lab?

The person, whoever it was, reached the end of the hallway and glanced back at the soldiers guarding the rest of the hallway, making sure she wouldn't try to escape. She looked at the door and *it opened without being touched*. The girl walked inside and sat down in the chair facing a desk. The walls were wooden that gave the rest of the room a warm feeling when paired with the rich maroon carpet. The

desk was massive, and made of some type of wood. The body waited there for a few minutes before the door opened again. Her head didn't turn to see the body as they walked in.

"So, how did you sleep?" the person asked from behind her.

Eleven froze. She knew that voice. She knew it all too well.

The body answer. "Yes." Eleven recognized the voice was female. The person walked around the desk and her worst fears were confirmed. It was Papa. She couldn't believe he was alive, as she was now convinced that this was happening now, and wasn't some weird flashback to her imprisonment. Even after Kali had made her see him and try to convince her that he was alive, she hadn't looked for him, as she had believed him dead for sure.

"Do you know why today is important?"

Her head nodded. "Today is my final test."

He smiled warmly. A smile Eleven knew was faked. "Good, it had taken me several times to reach this stage. My last subject came close but unfortunately escaped out of my grasp several times. I realized that at this point it would be easier to move onto the next subject, which happened to be you."

"She was Eleven?"

"Yes, although her birth name was Jane."

"When does the test begin?"

He came around to move closer to her. "Soon. If you pass the test, you will prove yourself loyal to me, and you will help me achieve many great things. You will succeed where she failed."

"Yes Sir."

"They are getting things ready, and in five minutes we will begin. These will prove harder and more stressful than any tests I have given you in the past."

"I know."

"Good." A red light went off in the corner and a loud buzzer began to sound. She stood up and followed Brenner into the hallway, which was now devoid of the soldiers. She followed him into the first door on the left. Inside was white tiles covering the floor and walls, with cold fluorescent lights covering the ceiling and bathing the room in bright lighting. There was just a metal chair and desk in the room. On one wall there was a black screen, which she assumed to be a one way mirror. Brenner gestured to the chair, and she sat down. He wished her good luck and left the room. A hatch opened in the desk, and a cage popped up out of it. Inside was one lone cat.

Eleven gasped in the dreamscape. This was another number. It had to be. This was a test just like one she had been forced to attempt, even though she had refused every single time. Would this girl flake out like her, or would she kill the cat?

The girl closed her eyes, but Eleven, now realizing that this was something that was happening right now, was now able to watch from a third point of view. This was something her powers were showing her in the void. She watched as the girl stretched a hand out towards the cat, and it began to make a horrible hissing sound as the power began to hurt it. The hissing quickly grew louder before it turned into whimpering, and then the cat fell over, dead. Tears were streaming down Eleven's face as the girl stood up without remorse and wiped the blood off of her face. She couldn't believe that the girl had done it. And if this was the first test, what were the others going to be?

The door opened and Brenner ushered her into the next door in the hallway. It was identical to the first, except now there was a door on the opposite wall as well. The process was repeated and the girl sat down, waiting. The door opened and a scientist carried in something swaddled in blankets. He placed it onto the table and walked out. The girl reached out and unwrapped the bundle. Eleven physically recoiled away from the table when she saw the baby boy that had been inside the bundle. She didn't want to believe that the girl was capable of this kind of atrocity, but even as she thought that, the girl closed her eyes and stretched her hand towards the baby. It began to cry and whimper as the pressure increased on it. Then suddenly it fell

silent as his lungs were crushed from the pressure, and a few seconds later, the baby fell still. Eleven felt she would be sick, and she probably would have been if this had been happening for real.

Brenner walked back in. "Good. No one thought you'd be able to harm your brother, but I knew you wouldn't disappoint."

She nodded at him and got up to follow him into the next room. This one was slightly larger and more spacious than the last. There was no desk or chair in this one, just two sets of shackles attached to the opposite wall. Brenner nodded at her and she stood facing the wall. Minutes passed, and Eleven began to relax some and wonder what this test could be. After about 10 minutes passed according to the clock on the wall, the door finally opened, and from the darkness beyond that door came two soldiers leading two people in the room. They looked healthy enough besides some bruises and cuts covering their bodies. Each of them had their hands and ankles shackled and a hood over their heads. The soldiers took them over to the shackles and attached them to their arms and legs, making them almost completely unable to move. The soldiers stripped their hoods off of their heads and walked out the same door they had come into.

Once the stranger's eyes had adjusted to the bright lights, the man looked around and then focused on her. "Who are you? Where are we?" When she stayed silent, the man began to get angry. "Tell me NOW DAMMIT!"

The girl laughed at his anger. "I thought you would recognize me. As soon as you were brought in I recognized you too."

The woman looked up, and blood from a gash in her head streamed into her eyes. "Why would we know you?" She looked her up and down. The girl had long black hair, tan skin, and brown, almost black eyes. She didn't resemble anyone the woman had ever met in her life, or so she thought. All of a sudden, the woman got a strange feeling deep in her core. She did know this young woman. "Elizabeth? Is that you?"

The girl looked sinister as she smiled at the couple. "Correct. You are my mother and father."

Her dad looked bewildered. "But that, that isn't possible, our daughter died when she was 5 years old. She drowned. We buried the

body."

Brenner's voice came over the intercom. "That is your daughter Mister and Misses Carpenter. You buried a fake."

Her dad became angry again. "You evil son of a bitch! You kidnapped out daughter from us?!"

She nodded. "Yes father, he did. But do not be mad at him, for he has helped me unlock my true powers that would have been squandered if I had stayed with you."

Her parents stared at her. "Powers?"

She nodded once more and reached out her hand towards the lights. The began to flicker on and off. Two of them just turned completely off and then shattered. Her parents stared at the ceiling. They were at a loss for words. Her mom looked convinced, but her dad still seemed skeptical.

"Perhaps you need another demonstration father?"

Eleven knew what was going to happen next, and she didn't want to watch. But even when she closed her eyes and covered her ears, she could still see and hear the events unfolding in front of her. "Sure, whatever you say."

The girl's evil grin intensified. She closed her eyes once more and stretched her hand towards her mother. Her father looked at her strangely before her mother suddenly cried out in pain. He quickly looked at her before realizing that it was his daughter that was doing this. "

"Elizabeth stop! I believe you. You don't have to do this!"

"No father, I do. I must pass the test."

Her father kept screaming at her to stop, but she pushed his voice out of her mind as she tightened her grip on her mother's insides. She was determined not to be another failure like the horrid Eleven Dr. Brenner had always talked about. She squeezed on her mother's vital organs, bursting each one like a balloon. Blood streamed from her face as her stomach, lungs, and heart were each destroyed. Eleven

watched in horror as the woman finally stopped screaming and fell limp against her chains. Tears were streaming down the man's face as well as her own. She wanted it to stop, she didn't want to see anymore. She didn't want to be here anymore. But the void wouldn't let her leave. It wanted her to see this.

"Wh-why?" the father asked.

"Because," the girl said as she walked up to her father. "This is my final test." And with that, she put her hand on his head and then used her powers to burst his brain instantly. The force was so powerful, his entire head exploded in a mist of blood and gristle. The girl stepped back and walked to the door. It opened and Brenner quickly swept her into a hug.

"I am very proud of you, Twelve."

"So I passed the test?"

"Yes my dear. You passed with flying colors."

"Good. I am no Eleven."

"Yes, you are not. We will get you outfitted with some new clothing, and then you and I will begin our quest."

"What about Eleven. She is still out there. What if she finds out?"

He smiled. "Oh, she does know. She's been watching this entire time." Eleven froze. He walked over to where she was standing and leaned down directly into her face.

"Yes, Eleven, I am alive, and I have found a new protege, one far stronger than you were ever were. She passed every test I gave her. She is not a failure such as yourself." He grinned. "Watch your back Eleven." He then took back his hand to slap her as he had done so many times previous, and just as he would have struck her, the void dissolved and she woke up with a start, tears streaming down her face. She quickly ran to the bathroom to vomit. Once she was finished, she slid down the wall and put her head in her hands as she thought about what she had just seen. Papa was truly alive, and he knew she was too. She tried to keep as quiet as possible.

Unfortunately, she could not stay quiet enough. She heard the door creak open.

"El? Are you okay?"

It was Mike. She shook her head no and he walked into the bathroom and sat down on the tiles next to her. He put his arm around her shoulders as she leaned into him and cried. She flung her arms around him and he held her as tightly as he could. She cried as hard as he thought was humanly possible into his shoulder, her sobs muffled by his jacket. After a few minutes, she began to calm down a little, and her cries slowed to only once and awhile. Mike started to get up, but she grabbed his hand and pulled him back close to her.

"Stay." was all she said. So he did.

Five minutes later she had calmed down and was slowly breathing once more. Mike in fact thought she had fallen asleep until she removed her head from his shoulders and looked up at him. "Mike, I'm scared."

He brushed a stray lock of hair out of her eyes. "Why? Did you have a bad dream?"

She shook with fright. "I thought it was just another dream. But Mike, this was real."

"What do you mean El?"

Her voice was shaking. "I was back. In a lab. But I wasn't myself." I was watching someone else."

"Who was that?"

"Her name was Elizabeth. But they called her Twelve."

"Who is they?"

"Brenner."

Mike's mouth dropped wide open. "He-He's alive? The Demogorgon jumped onto him!"

She nodded. "I don't know how, but he knew I was watching them in the Void."

They sat in silence for a few moments before Mike looked down at her small form laying in his arms. "What did you see in this vision?"

El almost began to cry again it seemed. "The girl was being put through a test. She had to- to kill a kitten." He voice wavered even more and tears filled her eyes. "And th-then she, she killed her baby brother... and, an-and then she killed her m-mom and dad." She finally broke down and began to sob once more into him.

He couldn't believe what he was hearing. This girl sounded evil. More like Darth vader than Luke Skywalker. And if Brenner was really alive, and this girl, Twelve, was one of his experiments, he could almost certainly wreak havoc on their lives once more.

"He told me to watch my back Mike. What if he comes for me?"

"You don't have to worry El, he'll have to get past Hopper, and Joyce, and Dustin, Will, Lucas, Max, and most importantly, me. We'll protect you. And you have your powers."

"I know. But seeing him made me feel..." She couldn't seem to think of the right word.

"Despair?"

She gave him a puzzled look. "Despair?"

"It's a feeling. Like you have no hope left, and nothing seems like it can make it better."

"That is how I felt, yes."

He leaned down and kissed her forehead, and then gave her a quick peck on the lips. "We're gonna get you some water, and then we're going to go back asleep in your fort. In the morning, you and I are going to tell Hopper about this. He'll know what to do."

"But what if he doesn't let me keep going to school?"

"Well, Brenner didn't say he was coming after you for sure. So that should be enough for him. He just needs to know he is alive."

"Okay."

He stood up and walked her back into the pillow fort and helped her lie down under a blanket. He lied down right next to her and she cuddled up as close as she could to him. He wrapped his arms around her and she grasped his hand.

"Goodnight Mike."

"Night El."

5. Revelations and Arcades

Eleven didn't have any more nightmares or visions throughout the night, and slept soundly in Mike's arms until morning. She and Mike were the first to awake. She opened her eyes, and just looked at Mike for a few seconds, revealing in his cuteness. She would have stayed there longer, but she had to pee, so she tried to get up as slowly as possible, but as she shifted, he awoke as well.

He groaned. "Morning El."

She smiled at his tired bedhead. She was a morning person and already felt like doing something. "Morning Mike. I have to pee."

"Don't let me stop you. I'll be upstairs making some breakfast."

"Eggos?" she said hopefully, with a pleading look in her brown eyes.

He laughed at her. "Yes El, Eggos for breakfast."

She smiled hopefully and climbed over the sleeping forms of the others in the party and went into the bathroom and locked the door. Mike did the same but instead went up the stairs to the kitchen. He looked at the clock and realized he had only gotten about 5 hours of sleep since he and Eleven had been up for about half an hour when she had her vision. He sighed, realizing that even a year later there would still be complications with their relationship. They would have to tell Hopper about it, so he could be sure to make sure to keep an eye out for Brenner and this Twelve.

He popped 4 Eggos into the toaster, even though she would probably want more. Even though they would still have to be careful, he was just happy they could see each other every day in school. He had a terrible thought just then. What if Hopper took her out of school? He had better let him visit her if he did. He realized he had to calm down and just enjoy their time together now and worry about this later today.

He heard the basement door open and looked over to see Eleven walk out of it and over to where he was standing by the toaster. She wrapped her arms around him and hugged him as they stood there.

"I had fun last night Mike, even with the dream. It is one of my favorite memories."

"I had a lot of fun too."

He leaned down and gave her a quick kiss. Since they had last seen each other at the Snow Ball, he had grown at least 4 or 5 inches, while she had only grown about an inch. she had only grown about 1 or 2. The Eggos popped out of the toaster and they grabbed some syrup and plates and sat down at the table to eat. El woffled down hers and in mere minutes she was putting some more in the toaster, while Mike had only finished one.

As they were eating, everyone else slowly began to trickle into the kitchen and grab breakfast. First Dustin and Will sleepily walked up the stairs and made waffles. Will was so sleepy he ended up putting an Eggo into the sink instead of the toaster, much to everyone else's amusement. A few minutes after they appeared, Lucas and Max showed up as well, slightly more awake than Dustin and Will had been. They all ate mostly in silence, and afterwards they went downstairs to watch cartoons.

After another few hours, Mike's mom called down the stairs to tell Hopper was on his way here for Eleven. She began to gather up her stuff.

Dustin got up as well. "Hey Mike, me and the others were going to meet Steve and go to the arcade for a while, wanna come?"

He did, but he and El had to talk to Hopper about the vision she had had last night. "Sorry guys, I'm gonna stay here, I'm pretty tired."

"Suit yourself dude. We're having a Dig Dug tournament!"

Max grinned. "Which I'm going to kick your guy's butts at."

"I don't know Max, I got pretty close last time."

"Shut up Lucas that was dumb luck."

He rolled his eyes at her. Everyone joined Eleven in getting their stuff together. Dustin took home most of the junk food but he let her keep

the Twizzlers, as those had been her favorite of the night. Everyone gathered up shoes and clothing articles. A few minutes later, goodbyes were said and everyone minus El and Mike left out the back door and hopped on their modes of transportation.

The ones left walked upstairs and waited by the door for Hopper to arrive. Mike could tell that she was nervous, as she kept buttoning and unbuttoning her left overall strap. He took her hand and squeezed it reassuringly. "Don't worry, everything will be alright."

A few minutes later, they heard his Jeep pull up. They opened the door and walked outside to meet him halfway.

"Alright kid, I know you don't want to leave Mike but it's time to go." When he turned and noticed she wasn't following him, he sighed and crossed his arms and raised an eyebrow at her. "Kid I know you don't want to leave, but you'll see him Monday."

They glanced at each other. "Actually, Sir, we have something to tell you. Something very important," Mike said.

He got an angry look on his face. "There better have been no funny business last night boy, or I'll bury you."

"Funny business?" Eleven asked innocently.

Mike flushed. "No Sir, it has to do with El's past. She had a vision last night."

Hopper's face grew concerned. "Yeah, we need to talk about that. Get in."

Mike and Eleven got into the car and he sped off before they had even buckled their seatbelts. "We have to pick up Joyce. She needs to know too."

They raced off towards the Byers household. Just when they thought they could put the lab and the Upside Down behind them, it came crawling back.

The road to Steve's house

The rest of the group biked along to Steve's house. He had become an

unlikely 7th member to their party after the events 10 months ago. Well, he claimed he wanted nothing to do with their little party or their activities because they were "a bunch of little shit-for-brains kids". His activities with the kids suggested otherwise though. He had obviously taken Dustin to the Snowball and had helped him fix up his hair. But even after that, he had reconciled with Nancy and Jonathan and had started hanging out with the kids once or twice a month when he was free. He would never admit it to anyone, but after protecting them from the Demo-dogs, he felt strangely parental towards them. Especially Max, as her brother was a piece of shit psychopath, and Dustin, as he had no dad of his own.

After the dance, about a week later Steve had seen Dustin walking down the road in the rain as he was driving past. He stopped and pulled over to the side of the road and rolled his window down.

"Hey, Dustin! Want a ride?"

Dustin was immensely grateful and hopped in as quick as he could. "My bike's tire popped when I hit a rock the way home," he said to explain why he had been walking home.

"Why'd you pick me up anyway?" he has asked.

The question caught Steve off-guard. "Uh, I don't know why. Just felt like it I guess. You're still a little shithead."

Dustin nodded, but he had a knowing smile on his face. "Uh-huh. Well anyway, if you ever want to learn how to play D&D with us, next saturday we are doing a beginning campaign, so we could teach you."

"Yeah right like I want to play that nerd game. I'm a busy guy."

But sure enough, one week later Steve showed up and quickly sat down in the basement with the 4 boys and Max. El was still in hiding, although sometimes Mike would set up the Supercomm so everyone could hear and she could participate at least in voice. Steve became a Paladin, the second in the group, as he said he was the most like a knight. He actually had fun, although he was less strategic and more reckless than anyone else in the group. More often than not, he would attack rather than retreat or outwit enemies. Once his character gained strength levels throughout the campaign, this tactic gained some effectiveness.

During the last 10 months, he had joined them on many adventures around Hawkins. He had gone to the arcade with them, where he had beaten Will's high score on Donkey Kong. He had gone to places like the movies or ice cream shops with Dustin or the group. No one mentioned it, but he only ever did things alone with Dustin, and he was definitely closest with him. Steve had turned out to be a truly great party member, even though he wouldn't admit he was one. Sure, he had taken lots of flack from his high school buddies for hanging out with a bunch of 13, 14, and 15 year olds, but he had to admit, they were better friends than any of them had ever been. They were so honest and kind and pure, and he wanted to protect that.

The party had almost reached his house by now, and he knew they would be coming soon, so he was waiting outside for them. They biked up his driveway and waved to him.

"Hey Steve, you ready to get your ass kicked?"

"Yeah, in your dreams shithead."

He hopped down from his seat on the the porch and walked over to them. He would be driving over as he didn't have a bike like them. He still said hi to each of them and asked where Mike was. They explained that he had been too tired after their sleepover to come to the arcade with them. Steve thought that was a little odd, as no kid would pass up a free trip to the arcade no matter how tired they were. But he got into his car and drove off towards town as the kids followed behind him, albeit at a slower pace.

Hopper's Cabin in the woods

They had stopped at Joyce's house and been told to stay in the car while Hopper went inside and explained the situation. Five minutes later, the both of them had walked out and got back into the jeep. Joyce had immediately gone into "mom mode" and began to fret over Eleven, feeling her forehead and asking her if she was alright. Hopper had reassured her that she felt fine physically, and that Joyce just needed to hear about this dream she had had the night before. Eleven and Mike had both spoken up, saying that it was a vision, not just a dream. Hopper glanced in the mirror and noticed that they were holding hands. Any other time he would have played the bad cop/protective father role, but he thought he would let it slide, just this

once.

He would never tell either of them, but he genuinely thought that they were a nice couple. He could tell that Mike truly cared for her, and that he would never take her for granted. Hell, the kid had basically tried to kill him when he had found out that he had been hiding Eleven from him that entire time. Any 13 year old that cared that much about a girl at that age obviously felt strongly for her. And on the other side things, he would have to use several sets of hands to count the number of times Eleven had had several full-on tantrums, sobbing over how much she missed Mike. For the first month, there had been more nights that she had fallen asleep crying in his arms over him than nights she hadn't.

They drove down the dirt path and eventually reached the area where he normally parked his jeep. They stepped out and carefully walked along the path to the cabin. Hopper still had the tripwires up, so he made sure Joyce and Mike were aware of those when they got close. A few minutes later they all stepped inside the cabin itself.

"Anyone want anything to drink? We got tea, coffee, uh, apple juice," Hopper asked.

Eleven perked up. "Apple juice Papa! Mike, you need to try it!" "Uh, El? I think-" Hopper began to say, but Mike cut him off.

"It sounds great El! Hopper, I'll take a glass please." He had obviously had it before hundreds of times, but she had been so excited to share this with him, he decided to play along.

Hopper gave him a rare smile and warm nod. He knew what Mike was doing, and it only reaffirmed his feelings over him. He poured two glasses of juice out and set them in front of them. Mike took a sip and told El it tasted really good. She positively beamed.

Hopper and Joyce sat down opposite them and looked at the two teens holding hands across from them. "So, El, tell us what you saw last night."

Hey eyes got wet and she gripped Mike's hand harder.

"Take your time kid."

She took a deep breath and began to recount the events from her vision.

The Arcade

It was a saturday, so the arcade was packed as usual. Almost every game cabinet was filled with several kids waiting behind the others. Thankfully, Dig Dug only had two others at it, as Max's high score was so incredible almost no one wanted to try to beat it anymore. They only had to wait about 5 minutes before the kid lost and he and his buddy walked away to go to another game. Dustin hopped on and began to play the game as his friends stood behind him and cheered him on. Or in the case of Max and Steve, yelled things such as insults and playful jabs at his technique to screw him up.

He was doing better than usual today, and he quickly reached a very high score of 500,000 points, and he could see Max beginning to worry, as he was only about 300,000 points away from beating her high score, and if he kept playing like he was, he would easily beat it and finally take back his title of champion of Dig Dug. Will and Lucas and even Steve were cheering him on like crazy now, as they all wanted to knock down Max from her top spot. He came within 100,000 points of her score, and she was almost visibly sweating at this point. He could hear his friends behind him, but he tuned them out. He was in the zone and nothing could stop him. 75,000 points, 50,000 points, 25,000 points, 10,000 points. At this point, he and Max were both sweating profusely. Other friends might have worried about the friend they were beating messing them up on purpose to preserve their high score.

At just 2,500 points away, tragedy struck. Dustin's hands, slippery from sweat, came off of the joystick and in that split second his hands were away from the joystick, a dragon creature came up from behind him and got him, bathing his character in flame. He died and everyone groaned from behind. Well, everyone besides Max that is. She let out a loud cheer which drew several odd looks from people standing near them, not that she cared of course. She was just happy her high score had been kept intact.

"Oh come on you piece of shit game and these piece of shit hands! I was so close!" Dustin whirled on Max. "You know I would've beaten you!"

She laughed. "Well, I guess we'll never know now."

"Bullshit!"

Steve took him by the shoulders and turned him around to face him. "Listen, as a consolation prize, I'll take you to get ice cream sometime this week."

That seemed to calm him down some, and everyone else began to take their turns at the game. No one else could even get close to Dustin or Max's score. Surprisingly, Steve was actually the closest to either of their scores, only 200,000 points off. They all walked away from the game laughing at Dustin's face when his hand had slipped of the joystick.

Of course, nothing ever could ever be that simple in the town of Hawkins. As they were leaving the arcade, the lights began to dim and all of the arcade machines began to flash rapidly. Suddenly, the power completely shut off and then came back at full force. The games began to spark and sputter, and they heard several capacitors pop and the smell of burned electronics filled the air. As quickly as it had started, the lights returned to normal and the machines came back on, except for the few which were now broken.

Keith came around from the counter and stood beside their little group. "Well that's a bummer. Good thing we have insurance."

They all turned to face him. "Keith, don't you think that was a bit weird for all of the lights and games to do that?" Dustin asked.

"Not at all. Probably just a power surge."

They all shared a glance at each other, obviously not convinced. They left the arcade and walked over by Steve's car.

Lucas spoke up first. "Guys, remember when El closed the gate? How the headlights got really bright and then dimmed when she stopped?"

They all nodded. "Yeah, the lights in Hopper's cabin did the same thing," Will chimed in.

"But Eleven went home with Hopper. I mean, she did tell us about that one time she

shattered the windows when she was upset, but that is nothing compared to that," Max added.

They all looked around at each other with worried looks on their faces. "Listen guys, I'm

sure she's fine, it probably was just a fuse surge," Steve said. "How about we go get that ice cream now? I'm buying."

They all shouted various words of agreement before running to their bikes. He smiled,

glad he had taken their minds off of things. He would never say it outloud, but he loved the shitheads.

15 minutes earlier, Hopper's Cabin.

"Okay, let's go through this one more time. Last night, you had a dream about Brenner?" Hopper asked.

Eleven shook her head. "No. A vision."

"Well how could you tell the difference?"

She gripped Mike's hand tightly, as she did whenever she had to recount her dreams with Brenner. "I was looking at them. Not from my eyes."

Joyce looked at Mike for clarification. "She means that normally she sees it from a first person view, but last night it was a third person view of him."

"And you said there was another girl with him, a girl he called Twelve?"

"Yes Papa."

"And she has powers like you?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

Here is was. The first time, she had avoided telling any of the gruesome details with Mike's help at bridging the gaps between events, but now it seemed liked there was no choice. "Sh-she killed." Her voice was already shaky, and her ears were filling with tears. Mike held her hand as tightly as he could.

"What did she kill kid?" Hopper's tone was always different with Eleven, but Mike had never heard it this gentle before.

She barely could get the words out. "A cat, a-and he-her baby brother." That was as far as she got before bursting into sobs once more. She stopped and leaned into Mike's shoulder and hugged him as she cried. Joyce and Hopper came to sit beside them and she began to rub slow circles into her back. This, coupled with the warmth from Mike's body lulled her into a deep sleep. Within minutes she was out cold in Mike's arms, tear tracks still staining her face. Hopper gently took her from Mike and put her in her bed, tucking her in tightly. He turned on her nightlight and shut the door only part way so she wouldn't be scared when she woke up. He walked back out to the sitting area and lit a cigarette for himself. He offered one to Joyce, who gladly accepted it.

He blew out a stream of smoke. "Kid, what else did she see?" He spoke in a hushed tone so he wouldn't wake Eleven.

"She killed her mom and dad. After that Brenner came in and told Twelve he could see El. He told her to watch her back."

Hopper's face fell and darkened. "Well, she can't leave anymore. It's too dangerous with that psychopath alive."

"No, you can't do that to her. I promised her that if we told you I wouldn't let that happen."

"Kid, that's nice of you, but she's my daughter."

"She just started going out into the world, and now you want to bring her right back in?"

"If that is what will protect her, then yes."

Before Mike could say another word, Joyce spoke first. "Hop, I think he's right. Think about it, if Brenner could see her then, he might

have a way to find her. Wouldn't it be safer for her to be at school during the day, surrounded by people? Possible witnesses to anything Brenner could try? It must be than her staying her all alone, where no one could try to stop him.

He tried to think of a rebuttal, but failed. "Shit. You have a point."

"Good. She keeps going to school, and I've been thinking, I want you too to come live with me."

"Wh-what?" he sputtered, choking on his cigarette.

"Yes, you heard me. It isn't good for her to live so far away from her friends, and I don't like you both living so far away out her. And now that Brenner could come looking, the more people together, the safer it is."

"Well, I'll have to ask her. She might not like it."

Joyce laughed. "Hopper, any chance for her to be closer to Mike and she'll take it." The boy's face reddened at this.

"Well, okay. I'll think about it. Do you even have enough room?"

"Well, I've mentioned it to the boys, and they both like the idea. Will and Jonathan both agreed they could share a room if El wanted her own, or her and Will could share one. You can sleep in my room or on the couch, whichever you like."

He still didn't seem sold on the idea, but he let it go for now. Now that Eleven was sleeping soundly and they had finished their conversation, Hopper got up to take Joyce and Mike back home. He put on his coat and motioned Joyce out the door, but Mike still hadn't moved.

"Come on kid, it's time to go."

He looked down at the floor. "Um, I was maybe thinking I could stay here Mr. Hopper sir."

"Mr. Hopper sir?"

Mikee's face burned. "Uh, I just think it might be better for Eleven, so when she wakes up she isn't alone and I'm not gone."

Hopper put on his mean face, but deep down he knew he was right and decided to mess with him a little. "Alright kid, just this once, and no funny business while I'm gone!"
The boy's face grew red. "Of course Sir."

Hopper went out of the cabin, telling him to lock all the doors. As he got into the jeep, Joyce slapped his arm playfully.

"What was that for?" he asked.

"You don't have to scare him Hop. He would never do that to El. Not to mention she probably has no clue as to what any of that stuff is."

"Yeah Joyce, I know. But I have to put on a mean scary dad face for him."

She just laughed as her put the car into drive and sped off out of the woods.

Back inside the cabin Mike settled into the couch to wait for her to wake up. After about five minutes though, he got bored and decided to have a look around the cabin. There wasn't much in the way of decorations, but it was still a cozy little area. Hopper's bed was in one corner. The TV was in the middle of the room with a couch and an armchair across from it. There was a small bathroom in one corner and a tiny kitchen in the other. The fireplace wasn't lit, but he suspected it must have been extremely cozy when it was. He opened the fridge and saw beers, some juices, fruits and vegetables, and eggs. He opened the freezer and let out a laugh when he saw several boxes of Eggos, with only a little room left for other things.

As he turned away from the kitchen, he noticed something on the small table he hadn't seen the first time. It was picture of him and Eleven that had been taken by Jonathan at the Snow Ball along with a photo of Hopper and her hugging. The small personal touches were cute, and it made him feel special to be in one of two pictures in the house.

He heard a squeak from behind him and turned around to see Eleven walking out from her room. She rubbed at her eyes sleepily as she walked over to where Mike was. She reached him and hugged him.
"Where is everyone?"

He hugged her back. "They left to go back home. Hopper should be back soon. I stayed to make sure you weren't alone when you woke up."

She kissed his nose. "So sweet."

He kissed her nose in return. "So are you."

She walked over to the freezer and pulled out a box of Eggos. "Want some?"

He nodded and she began to make them some. She seemed very proud when she set 2 slightly burned Eggos in front of him. He ate them all and she was positively beaming at him. After they were both finished, Hopper still hadn't returned, so she pulled him by his hand into her room. While the rest of the small cabin had been undercoated, her room was the complete opposite. It was covered in pictures and posters and her little dresser was topped with figurines and other assorted knick knacks. He knew Nancy had given her some things when she had helped her get ready for the Snowball.

She showed him her bed, which was covered with a nice pink bedspread. While Eleven may have had a fierce loyalty to her friends and a strong and feisty side to her personality normally she was very much a girly girl. She loved pink things and dresses and lace and all that stuff that would normally make Mike grossed out, but nothing that had to do with Eleven grossed him out. She finished her small tour and hopped up on her bed. She patted the space next to him and he climbed onto the bed next to her. She grabbed him and pulled him down with her, cuddling up close to him. He knew that if Hopper saw them he'd be killed, but at that moment the joy of being with Eleven overwhelmed him.

"I am happy you are here with me Mike."

He gave her a puzzled look. "What do you mean?"

"During my vision. You were there with me and made me feel better. And today, you made me feel better again."

"Oh, well yeah, of course. No problem."

She looked him dead in the eyes and got as serious as she had ever been before. "Mike, if they come looking for me, you'll protect me, right?"

He took both of her hands in his. "Of course I will."

"What does love mean Mike?"

He was completely caught off guard. While they had said they loved each other a few times before, he had never really explained the meaning to her. It had never crossed his mind that she didn't really know the meaning. "Well, love is a feeling you have for people you really like. You want to spend a lot of time with them and do things for them and protect them."

"So I love you and all of my friends and Papa?"

"Yes, but when we say we love each other, it's a little different."

"Why?"

"Because we love each other in a special kind of way. We put each other first before anyone else. We hold hands and kiss."

"Okay, I think i get it now."

They stayed in her bed for a while, until both of them fell asleep in each other's arms. When Hopper returned home, he opened the door himself (he had installed a normal lock now) and walked into the cabin. He didn't hear any giggling, which he thought was suspicious. He walked over the El's room and looked in. His fist immediately clenched as he saw Mike and Eleven lying together in bed, holding each other tightly. After a few seconds though, he calmed down as he realized both were above the covers and fully clothed. He had told himself he wouldn't allow them to do this anymore, but he couldn't force himself to wake them up. He sighed, smiled, and walked into the kitchen to make some dinner for the three of them.

Many Miles away...

Twelve stood amidst the bodies of wreckage of the lab she had just destroyed. It has taken an immense amount of energy, and both her nostrils were bleeding. She wiped it away and turned to see a

helicopter approaching. It touched down and Brenner stepped out. He walked over to her and surveyed the damage.

"Very good. Now our real work can begin."

"Are we going after Eleven?" she asked.

"Not yet. We have more important things to worry about than a high school girl. But eventually, we will go after her."

Twelve turned away from him as a slight grin formed on her face as she looked into the flames. "I'm coming for you sister."

6. Preparations

A week had passed since the sleepover. Eleven had had no more visions since the first one, and they had all gone back to school. The week had gone smoothly, with no problems of any kind. Well, Dustin had gotten a B- on his first math test, but there had been no serious problems. It was now Friday, and the party sat at their usual table in the lunchroom, eating and making plans for this weekend.

"I'm telling you, Boba Fett could have easily beaten Luke if his jetpack hadn't gotten damaged by Solo," Dustin said, his mouth full of Pizza.

"You're crazy, there's no way he could've beaten a Jedi Knight!" Lucas said, crossing his arms at Dustin's ridiculous accusation.

"Come on guys, back me up here!" Dustin looked around the table for support, but only saw Will and Max giggling at him. Mike and Eleven were so enthralled by each other that they didn't even hear the argument going on next to them. He was showing her something between them, and she was watching him with an intense focus. "Hey lovebirds, would you guys pay attention? This is a serious topic here!"

They broke apart, but before either could say anything, the bell rung and everyone started to get up. "Sorry Dustin, I guess we'll have to continue this after school." Lucas told him with a grin.

"Yeah, you bet your ass we will!" he said before leaving the lunchroom. The rest of the group stayed together and laughed as Dustin walked away angrily. They met up with him again after gym class, where El had just kicked everyone's asses in a game of kickball. That girl could really kick a ball, or so Mike thought until he saw her wiping blood away from her nose. They all headed off to English, where everyone but Eleven slept through the boring lesson about *Tom Sawyer*. For whatever reason, the girl loved reading no matter what the book, the last bell rang and they all ran out to their bikes, where as promised, the argument began again as they rode over to Mike's house to continue their latest D&D campaign.

Eleven and Max were taking part this time around and the addition of a mage and a zoomer helped them a lot more than any of them would ever admit. Such as when they were on the Bloodstone Pass and had been surrounded by Lava Giants, but El had frozen them as Max weaved in and out of their legs to distract them.

They had just gotten to the final location when Mike's mom called down to them, "Mike, it's time for your friends to go home!"

They all groaned but knew better than to argue. They began to gather up their things when she called down again, "Jane, Hopper called and said he would be late. Would you like to stay for dinner?" she asked.

Eleven nodded at Mike and he told his mom she would like too. They said goodbye to the rest of their friends and then settled down to do their math homework. While it was one of his strong suits, Eleven had struggled with it since she had begun to learn it, so the evening consisted mostly of him helping her understand some of the harder concepts. After a delicious dinner of pot roast and green beans with Eggos for dessert, they settled down in the basement to watch some Television while they waited for Hopper. They didn't do much watching though, as after a few minutes, they grew bored with the show they were watching and began to talk and lazily make out, stopping every few minutes to kiss a couple more times before continuing the conversation. They were as happy as could be.

A few hours earlier, Hopper's Cabin

Joyce and Hopper had spent the last few hours discussing their next moves. Obviously, both of them didn't want to sit idly by and wait for something to happen, but it was hard to prepare for something when you didn't exactly know what that something was. They settled for making preparations for him to move in.

"So El said she would want her own room, so we'll have to move her bed and dresser over there sometime soon." Hopper said as he lit Joyce's cigarette.

"Next week sound good?" she asked.

"Yeah, that should work. I can take off a day or two to help you." he said, and she nodded.

They say there for a while, just enjoying the fall breeze and the smell of the forest around them. They had moved outside to his porch a little over an hour ago to get some fresh air, but had ended up sitting down and spending the time drinking coffee and reminiscing about old times.

Beside him, Joyce sighed. "I really thought this was over Hop. I thought we could finally go back to our normal lives. I thought El would finally have a chance to be a real kid for once."

"Yeah. I did too," he said putting down his mug and taking her hand. "But we have to be strong for them all. If he really does come looking for her, we need to protect them."

"I know Hop, but what if we can't? This girl, Twelve, she sounds ruthless. What if we can't stop her?"

He tried to come up with an answer, but he couldn't think of anything reassuring. Instead he took a long drag of his cigarette. Beside him, Joyce did the same.

She suddenly sat up beside him. "What if you talked to Owens? He got you El's birth certificate. He's obviously a decent man, maybe he can help us?"

He scoffed, "Help us with what?"

"Maybe he knows something about Brenner or the other experiments, or maybe he can find something out for us. It's worth a try."

"Well, I do still have his number. I guess it wouldn't hurt," he said, getting up and walking inside. He dug around in his drawers for some time before finally pulling out a card with the doctor's number on it. He dialed it into the telephone and waited while it rang.

After a few rings, someone picked up. "Hello? Who's this?" It was Owens.

"Uh, this is Jim Hopper. Chief Jim Hopper."

"Chief-o, good to hear from you. How's the girl?" he asked.

"Uh actually doc, that's what I was calling you about. I wanted to talk to you about something sensitive. Can we meet somewhere soon?"

"Well chief, I happen to be free tonight. What do you say to meeting at that bar again around 6? I do love their sandwiches."

"Yeah doc, that'd be great. Thanks."

"No problem at all," were his last words before Hopper heard him hang up on his end of the phone. He set the phone back into the receiver and turned to Joyce.

"Well?" she asked with an expectant look on her face.

"He said he can meet us tonight at 6," he told her.

"Well, you'd better call the Wheeler's and ask if El can stay for dinner. This might take some time."

He agreed and did just that before he and Joyce hopped into his car and sped off towards Hawkins.

Many miles away from Hawkins.

The scientist ran through the corridors, his arms filled with vital research papers. The lights had been shut off from a power surge, so the only light came from the blinking yellow emergency lights. He heard an explosion from elsewhere in the lab, and quickened his pace. He reached an elevator and pushed the button to go upwards towards the roof, where hopefully there would be a helicopter waiting for him to take him away from this place.

After reports had come in from 2 other labs being partially or completely destroyed, Scranton Laboratory had begun to prepare for a move upstate to a more secure location. Unfortunately, they had begun too late, and were now at the mercy of whatever was destroying labs across the country. He heard reports coming in from his radio. "It's.. strong... need backup!" before the voice cut out completely. He heard gunshots ringing throughout the facility as he rode the elevator up. Finally, he reached the top and stepped out of the elevator. It was much quieter up here, with only a few muffled explosions to remind him of what was happening across the lab. He

opened the roof access door, and much to his relief, there was a helicopter sitting there wait, it's blades already spinning. He got it and was handed a headset by one of the other two scientists.

"We were worried you wouldn't show! We were about to leave!" one of them shouted above the noise of the blades.

"What's happening?" he cried back to them.

"We don't know! All we heard was that there were multiple figures roaming around the

gates, and when they were approached, our soldiers began to die. Now half of the facility is on fire! We need to get to Washington and tell them what has happened." the other scientist explained.

He nodded at the pilot and felt themselves lift off. They were finally able to observe the

destruction below them. "Jesus..." he whispered under his breath. The entire front of the lab was demolished, and rubble was strewn about the grounds. Fires raged in the east and southern wings, and as they watched, a large explosion rose from the western wing, and they saw it collapse.

They had seen enough, and were just beginning to fly away when they felt the helicopter jerk to a halt. The rotors grinded, trying to move them forward. Suddenly, the copter was pulled backwards and he felt them falling towards the ground. The pilot wrestled with the stick, trying to straighten them out at least a little before they hit the ground. They landed with an enormous crash and he was thrown from the wreckage before landing on some not so soft dirt. He had blood in his mouth and could tell he had at least 5 broken bones, maybe more. Behind him, the helicopter exploded and he felt a wave of heat sear his back. As he tried to pull himself away from the crash with his one good arm, he heard someone walking up towards him. He tried to turn around and all he saw was a pair of black combat boots before he was hurled up into the air. He screamed as his broken bones were thrown about, and he came to a stop 5 feet above the ground, and saw something he couldn't believe.

"Brenner? Is that you?"

The man on the ground looked up at him. "Yes Simmons, it is I." The girl wearing the black combat boots walked into view beside him. She was wearing black combat pants and a sleeveless tactical vest lined with pockets. Her tan arms and face were the only parts of skin visible. Her black hair was in a tight bun atop her head, and her eyes stared soullessly up at him.

Brenner saw him looking at the girl. "This is Twelve. She has been helping me fulfill our destiny."

"Bu-but I thought you had died 2 years ago?" Simmons asked.

"Many people believed that, and I used it to my advantage. Now, I will finally be able to do what I was always meant to do."

"You've gone mad Brenner. You're destroying labs where your colleagues work. What are you going to gain from that?!"

"I must make sure that there is no one to stand in my way," and with that he signaled Twelve, and she closed her hand, cracking Simmons' neck and dropping him to the ground. Brenner turned to face her. "We only have 2 labs left, and then it is off to Hawkins to enact the final part of our plan."

She nodded, and together they walked out of the gate to the lab, leaving nothing but a destroyed and burning building behind them.

Wheeler's Basement, Present Time.

Mike and Eleven had both fallen asleep on top of each other. The TV sat in the corner playing an infomercial at a low volume. Holly and Mrs. Wheeler had gone out to run some errands, and Mr. Wheeler was asleep in his chair in front of the TV upstairs as usual. All was quiet in the house. That was about to change.

Eleven awoke with a scream. She jumped off Mike, not realizing she was safe in the Wheeler household yet. She looked frantically around for anything familiar and saw the old pillow fort. She leapt inside it and went under the covers. She put the blankets to her nose and took in the scent of him. She was sobbing and she couldn't stop. She had

been back in the void watching as the girl slaughtered dozens of innocent scientists and bystanders as she fulfilled Papa's goals.

"El, are you okay?" Mike asked from the mouth of the fort. She shook her head, and he saw the blanket move back and forth. "Can I come in?" It moved up and down, so he stepped inside and sat down beside the lump that was Eleven and began to rub her back while whispering soothing words. After a few minutes, she stuck her head out from under the blanket, leaving her body inside. If it hadn't been so serious, Mike might've laughed, as she reminded him of Yertle the Turtle. Tear tracks stained her face, and her makeup had run down her face. She looked up at him, her eyes watery.

"I saw her again."

"Twelve?" he asked, and she nodded. "What was she doing?"

She took a deep breath before she answered. "Her and Papa are killing scientists. He said they are doing that so no one can stop them."

"Do you know what they are trying to do?"

She shook her head again. "No, but they said they have two labs left, and then they are coming to Hawkins."

"We have to tell Hopper. If they are coming that soon, we need to prepare."

"Mike, Twelve is powerful. She's taken down entire buildings. I don't think I can stop her alone."

"But you closed the gate last year, and you said that was huge."

"Mike, I also slept for a week after that. We need help."

"From who?"

"My sister."

Hawkins Downtown, 6 PM

Joyce and Hopper arrived at the same bar he had met Owens in a

year ago when they had discussed Eleven's future. It was ironic that the reason they were back also pertained to her future once more. They settled down in a booth near the back. It was warm and cozy inside, and they sat eating french fries and nursing beers.

15 minutes after he was supposed to be there, Joyce finally said something "He's late Hop. What if he's not coming?"

Hopper, always the optimist, said "Or maybe he's been captured."

Fortunately, about 5 minutes later, Owens walked through the door and waved at the two sitting in the booth. They noticed he still walked with a limp from his injuries last year. He sat down across from them. "How are you two?"

"Not too great Doc." Hopper said.

"And why is that?" he asked.

"We have a very good reason to believe that Brenner is still alive, and that he's still working with children with powers."

"Well according to official records, he was killed in the school 2 years ago when that monster attacked him."

"Okay, but what about unofficial records?" Hopper asked with an exasperated tone. He had no time to mess around.

"Look, chief, why are you even asking about Brenner?"

He looked at Joyce and she nodded. "My girl, Eleven, she had a dream where she saw him alive, walking and talking and being a psychotic son of a bitch."

"Are you sure it wasn't just a flashback?" he asked them.

"Yeah, mainly because there was a girl called Twelve and she was evil. She killed her own Mother and Father."

Owens face went blank. "Well, that's not very good."

"Yeah, it isn't," Hopper said, rolling his eyes. "So we need to know, have you heard anything at all about him?"

"Just one thing. About a month after he died, there were some rumors about how he had survived and was dismissed from the Department of Energy and sent to work someplace higher up. That rumor was quickly silenced and I haven't heard anything since. But there have been attacks on 2 of our labs now, with them ending up completely or partially destroyed, and no survivors. That could be your Twelve."

"What do you think he would want?"

"I have no idea."

"Do you really think he might come back here?"

"It's a possibility I guess. Maybe there is something special about Hawkins. I'll make some calls and see what I can find."

"Thanks. We really appreciate it," Hopper said, leaning over the table to shake his hand.

"It's no trouble. The least I can do for last year. How is Will?" he asked Joyce.

"Oh, he is so much better. Lot's of nightmares though."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that." He stood up and gave them a wave before departing.

Hopper turned to look at Joyce. "We are gonna need those kids. Nancy and Jonathan too. I hate to admit it, but when it comes to this kind of stuff there usually know more."

"Still Hop, should we put them in danger like that?" she asked him.

"I'd feel safer if we were together. If that psycho comes here with that girl, I want us to be in the same place when we face them."

She nodded in agreement, and they left the bar.

Hopper's Cabin

Some time later, Hopper and Joyce pulled up to his cabin once more.

They noticed the lights were on inside and Hopper pulled his gun out before giving the secret knock. He heard the locks slide open and cautiously opened the door. He holstered his gun when he realized there was no danger to them. On the couch sat Mike and Eleve, the latter tightly grasping his hand. He saw the faint lines of old tear tracks on her face. They put down their mugs of hot chocolate and turned to face them when they heard the door open.

"Did you have another vision?" he asked her, and she nodded.

"What happened?" he asked, sitting down across from her.

"I saw a lab. A different lab. Twelve was destroying it, killing scientists," she said, shaking her head as if to try to dispel the bad memories from her head.

"Do you know why sweetie?" Joyce asked, rubbing her knee.

"Brenner said he didn't want anyone to be able to stop him. I don't know what he is going to try to do."

"Was there anything else kid?" he asked, and she nodded. "What?"

"He said there is only 2 labs left, and then he is coming here. To Hawkins."

He felt his breath leave him as if he had just been thrown to the ground. His worst fears had just been confirmed. That man was coming back here, where Eleven was. It wasn't fair. He had hidden her for almost 2 years trying to prevent something like this from happening, but now he felt like that was all for nothing.

"Well it has to be something to do with the lab, right Hop?" Joyce asked him, breaking him out of his thoughts.

"Probably."

"Well then we go there first. We break in, look around, see if we can find anything. We need to try to learn something about his plans."

"I agree."

Mike spoke up for the first time since they had begun to talk. "We want to come too. We can help."

"Listen guys, I know you want to help, but it might not be safe there. If we find anything, we'll bring it back."

"But-"

"No buts. You aren't coming, and that's final," he said, using his best authoritative voice he had.

The kid shut up, and any other time Hopper might have thought it was weird that he conceded defeat so quickly, but he was thinking about too many different things to focus on that.

"Let's go tonight. We need to get ahead of this guy if possible before he gets here." he said suddenly, and got up to get his guns and some flashlights for him and Joyce. She had no complaints and they were soon ready to go.

"Stay with El and protect her," he said to Mike as he shut the door, and the boy felt a sense of pride in the fact that he trusted him to protect her. Too bad he was going to break that trust very soon.

"We leave tomorrow morning?" he asked her, and she nodded. While they had waited for Hopper to return, she had gone into the void to find her sister. She had been relieved to know she had evaded capture from the police, and was now living in some city called Detroit. She had told her she was coming, and Mike and her had both thought it was a good sign when she had nodded and said she would be waiting.

"To Detroit it is then," he said, and they went into her room to pack a small bag of the things they would need. She grabbed her old black jacket Kali had given to her last year and put on a black jacket. She slicked back her curls and once again donned black eye shadow. She added a pair of jeans and black boots to the look. She threw some clothes and food into her bag and grabbed some money out of the safe for bus fare.

She looked at Mike. "Bitchin."

He nodded in agreement. "Bitchin."

They walked out of the cabin hand in hand. They would need to head

to Mike's house to get some supplies for him, and then they would be on a bus to Detroit by 7:30 in the morning. They just hoped it wouldn't be too little too late.

I guess you could say that she's a little runaway? Brenner is back with a vengeance. Could there perhaps be an even more sinister shadow government agency that he has aligned himself with, or has he recruited like-minded people to his cause? I guess you'll have to wait and see. Stay tuned for the next chapter soon! Thanks for reading! (As I'm writing this it makes sense to me and I hope it makes sense to all of you guys too!)

7. Brother and Sister

Hawkins Lab

The ride to the lab had been silent. The radio was off and the only sounds were the squeak of the tires against the road or an occasional clearing of a throat or slight snuffle. The lab had been all chained up and its doors boarded, but as far as Hopper knew, it was unguarded. A simple axe and bolt cutters should get them in. They pulled off the road and drove the car a little ways into the woods before stopping. As the sound of the engine faded away, the only sounds became the calls of owls in the tree.

He turned to Joyce and put a hand on her shoulder. "You know you don't have to come in with me, right? It might be dangerous," he said.

She smirked at him. "What, do you think I can't take care of myself?" she asked.

He didn't smile back. "Joyce, I'm serious, we don't know what's in there. It could be nothing, or there could be something. Are you ready to take that risk?"

She nodded and let the grin slip off her face before putting a look of determination on her face. They unbuckled and got an axe and bolt cutters from the back of the jeep, throwing her the axe. They trekked through the woods as silently as they could, flashlights off, so they would remain undetected, just in case. They reached the fence and just like he had done 2 years before, he quickly cut a small hole through the wires and they both clambered through. They reached a spot behind a bush and observed. The parking lot was deserted, and all of the overhead lights were off. The building itself was dark and quiet. They were silent for a minute while they looked, and then Hopper tapped her shoulder and they made their way over to the front doors.

Hopper used the axe and made several quick strikes against the door, the loud banging sound making Joyce cringe as it disturbed the silence of the cool September night. After about 30 seconds, Hopper had broken through the plywood and they both went inside.

The lobby was cold, much colder than it had been outside. The air tasted clean and metallic as it had always, but slightly more dusty than it had ever been, as the lab had been abandoned a year. They walked around, shining flashlight in corners but finding nothing. Joyce walked around a pillar and stopped dead in her tracks. On the floor were the remnants of a blood stain that looked as if it had been haphazardly cleaned by someone in a hurry.

She felt her back lean against the pillar and suddenly found herself on the ground. She was crying but didn't even realize it until she had felt the warm teardrops land on her hands. Everyday did get easier without him, and while she was almost certain she had feelings for Hopper now, she still thought of him almost daily. His nerdy jokes, of how excited he would get when he was explaining something technological, or when Will or Jonathan would talk to him and get to know him. Bob had been lost too soon for this world, and it was all the dimmer because of it. But, he truly had been Bob Newby, superhero. Without him, they might have all died in that lab.

Hopper walked over to her and knelt beside her. "What's wrong?" he asked, placing a hand around her back. She pointed to the bloodstain and he suddenly let go of her, realizing what she was crying about. She gave him a confused look before getting up and throwing her arms around him. He seemed surprised but he returned both of his arms around her, and they sat there for a few minutes while she cried herself out.

She wiped her eyes and sniffled. "I'm sorry Hop. That hasn't happened in a while. Just seeing where... where it happened..." she trailed off, and he nodded in understanding.

He helped her to her feet and steadied her with an arm, "You good to go?" he asked.

She nodded and they looked around. The lab had 5 floors and the basement, and each floor had dozens of rooms and corridors. "This could take some time," he said as he looked at a map of the building on the wall.

"We could just go through the left most hall way and continue from there," Joyce suggested.

"Yeah, can you see if there's any paper at one of those desks?" he asked, and she ran over and began ruffling through the drawers. After a few seconds she found a couple pens and sheets of paper and brought them to Hop. "Okay, I'll sketch the basement you do the first floor and so on and so on, until we have a map of the entire building. Just make them crude lines, we just need hallway, rooms, and stairwells."

After about 10 minutes, they had maps that would work well enough for their purposes. They began in the basement, moving throughout the hallways and rooms, checking each one off as they went. Some rooms were completely bare, while others were filled with dusty desks and loose papers strewn about. Joyce and Hopper searched through each area carefully, reading papers they found for clues. They crossed off rooms as they went, making sure not to retrace their steps accidentally.

They walked into the room where the gate had been opened by Eleven 2 years ago, and where she had successfully closed it the year before. The hole in the ground was now covered by plywood and taped off with caution tape. The wall only had a crack in it where the original gate had been. Broken glass from the Demo-Dog attack still littered the ground.

"Is this where El managed to close it Hop?" Joyce asked him.

"Yeah. It's so weird to be here again." They stood there, thinking about all that had happened in their lives the past year, before he said, "Come on, we still have three floors to search."

They continued floor by floor, finding nothing on the first 3 but broken equipment and torn papers. Every Time they would see something promising their hopes would rise, but always crashing back down. It had now been almost 10 hours. He had signaled to El they wouldn't be home soon, and they went on searching the massive were now on the fourth floor, searching through the last room. It appears to have once been a storage area. Most of the actual items were gone, but the steel shelves still remained.

"Come on Joyce, let's check out the last floor," he said, thinking they were done on that floor.

"Come here a second Hop," she said, pointing to the wall. There was a small indent in the otherwise immaculate wall, just big enough for a finger to be inserted. He glanced at her and she poked it. A screeching sound emanating from the wall as old and un-oiled gears sprang to life, moving a section of wall out of the way. A dark corridor appeared behind where the wall had been. They glanced at each, a look of concern on their faces. He stepped just into the corridor and jumped a little when yellow emergency lights came on every 10 feet or so, providing just enough light to see down the corridor.

"Well, this looks interesting. Come on," he said before aiming his gun down the corridor and continuing forward. She stepped in after him. The air in the corridor felt even more stagnant than the rest of the lab, and it was damp and cold as well. After about 100 feet, it came to a staircase that started winding down, and down, and down. She was on stair 500 when she finally stopped counting. After a few more minutes though, they reached a small cinder block room lit by a single light in the middle of the room. On the opposite wall was a gunmetal steel door with a wheel on it. Hopper stepped forward and began to pull at it to no avail. With Joyce's help however, after much swearing and struggling, they managed to open the door.

Inside was a room no bigger than the Byer's living room, and the walls were made of cinder block and it was lit by those same yellow lights. Unlike the rest of the rooms however, this one was filled with computer equipment and filing cabinets packed full of research papers. On one wall there was several bulletin boards covered in what appeared to be diagrams of some sort. They were blue with uniform wavy lines everywhere but right in the middle. There the waves got small and choppy. They turned to the rows of computer monitors and found what appeared to be the control console. Hopper stared at it for a few seconds before tapping the enter key.

"*Please state your name,*" it read. He paused for another second before typing in "Sam Owens."

"*Welcome, Dr. Owens,*" appeared on the screen for a few seconds before it flashed over to a blank screen that only had several file icons on it. They read "*Time Irregularities, Space Irregularities, and Theories etc.*" Hopper clicked on the first one and data ran down the

screen before simple text was displayed onto the screen. He tried to comprehend what he was seeing, but it was full of scientific mumbo jumbo and it made no sense to him. He saw things like space-time continuum, and weakened irregularities, but he couldn't connect the dots. He looked at Joyce and she just shook his head.

"I think we're gonna need those kids. They might actually get some of what this is saying. Find some floppy disks so we can copy this stuff," he said, grateful he was able to at least do that. They searched through some desks and found a few blank disks, and some time later they had 3 disks, each filled with a section of the data. They turned off the monitor and were about to leave when Joyce noticed something on the wall.

"Hop, what's this countdown?" she asked him.

He went as white as a ghost. It read 6 minutes and 36 seconds, and was counting down. "Joyce, I don't know what that is, but if it's what I think it is, we have to leave. Right. Now," he yelled, grabbing her hand and pulling her towards the steps. They would have to go much faster up than they had down if they wanted to live.

Wheeler Household, 6:30 AM

When Mike and Eleven woke up early the next morning, Joyce and Hopper were still nowhere to be seen, which made leaving all that much easier. Eleven left a note saying how she was sorry for leaving again but how this was something she had to do. They ate breakfast, Eggos of course, and hopped on their bikes to head to Mike's house. It was Saturday, so they snuck in through the basement and she waited downstairs while he ran upstairs and packed his bag as quickly as he could. He was in the middle of deciding whether he needed 3 or 4 pairs of jeans when Nancy came in to his room.

"What are you-" she paused, seeing the half packed bag and wad of money on his bed. "Where are you going?" she asked.

He quickly stuffed the rest of his clothing into his bag before shouldering it. "Dustin's house," he said, hoping she was still tired enough to not process her thoughts that fast.

"You wouldn't need your life savings and that many clothes for that. What are you doing?" she asked again.

"Nothing," he said, trying to push past her, but she threw him back and closed the door. He told El he would only be five minutes, and it was nearing ten. He hoped she didn't come looking for him. They had a bus to catch in less than an hour, and it took 20 minutes to reach the bus station.

"Tell me or I'm waking up mom."

He sighed and kicked his bed in frustration. "Fine. Me and El have to go somewhere."

"Where?" she asked. Dammit, she wasn't giving up.

"We need to find her sister. Brenner is coming back, and she needs help to defeat his new experiment. Twelve. Hopper and Joyce are at the lab right now trying to figure out why he wants to come back here, but that won't help Eleven fight this girl."

"Brenner is the crazy scientist?"

"Yes."

She considered it for a moment. "Fine, but I'm coming with you," she said, opening his door to find Eleven standing outside. She jumped back in surprise, but to her credit didn't make a sound.

"Mike, we need to go," she said.

Before he could answer, Nancy said, "Yes El, I'm coming with you guys too."

"No," she said, shocking Nancy and Mike."

"Why?" the older girl asked, staring at her in bewilderment.

"Because, they don't like outsiders. I'm not even sure if they will like Mike. One of them tried to hurt me before my sister stopped him, she explained.

"There you go Nancy, that's why you can't come," Mike said, going

over to stand by his girlfriend. He took her hand. "We have to do this to prevent Hawkins' destruction."

"But I can't just let you go alone. You're only 14!"

"You and Jonathan left last year and made a huge difference. You stopped the lab here from ever hunting Eleven again."

"I'm grateful for that Nancy, but we have to do this, alone," El said.

Nancy seemed to have an argument with herself for a long time before throwing her arms around the two younger children. "Be safe. Please," she whispered as she hugged her back.

"We will," he told her, and she let them go and watched as they got their bikes and went off down the street. It amazed her how much older they were getting. She knew deep down that if that crazy scientist was coming back here, they would need help. She went downstairs to make breakfast while she thought up a good cover story for her brother while he was gone.

Mike and Eleven made good time to the bus station and were soon sitting outside on a bench waiting with only 2 others. As it was a small town, not many people wanted to go to Indianapolis. They would stop there and go to a much larger bus station to get to Detroit. The morning air was crisp and clean, just the right temperature to enjoy it without it being too cold.

They sat holding hands while she rested her head on his shoulder, enjoying each other's company as they waited for the bus. He saw the other two older women giving them distasteful looks, most likely due to El's fashion choices. Not that he cared of course, and he doubted she did either.

"So what's your sister like anyway? We never really talked about her," he asked.

She didn't look up at him as she answer, instead focusing on the trees across the road. "She was... interesting. She had friends and they all had funny hair, and they all dressed like this."

"Funny hair?" he asked.

She looked up at him and giggled. "Yeah. One had thin hair that stuck up really far," she said, mimicking a mohawk with her hands. "The two other girls had really poofy hair, and the other guy had a long braid. Kali's hair all went to one side," she said as she moved her curls to one side, showing him what it looked like.

"Well they sound interesting," he said, and she nodded in agreement. "What did you do with them?" he asked.

"Kali showed me how to make my powers stronger. We almost killed a scientist." That made him jerk fully awake suddenly, and he gave her a look of disbelief.

"You what?!" he whisper shouted at her.

"I didn't! They told me they killed the people who experimented on me and Kali when we were kids in the lab. They thought it was making them pay for what they did. But he had a family so I wouldn't let them. Then the cops came and I got on a bus back here."

He settled down a little now that she and explained things. "Okay, you just startled me there for a second. What can she do?"

"What do you mean?" she asked him.

"Like, what's her powers."

"Oh, she can make you see things that aren't really there. She made me see a butterfly, and... Papa," she said, her voice wavering as she thought of her fake father.

"I'm sorry. That must've been unpleasant for you," he said, taking her in his arms. They were silent again, and a few minutes later they boarded the bus to Indianapolis. They got seats near the back and stored their bags overhead as the bus began to move. It was about an hours ride, and Eleven fell asleep almost instantly with her head in his lap. He absentmindedly stroked her back as she slept, and he watched the trees pass by as the bus sped down the highway.

He was going to be in so much fucking trouble when he got home. But he figured it would be better to have a place to come home to than it be destroyed. Besides, he couldn't have let El make this trip

alone. While she had done it before and managed to make it out unscathed, there was no telling what this time would bring. He only hoped they could make the 5 hour journey twice and convince her to help them before Hawkins was no more.

The road back from the lab, 8 AM

Joyce and Hopper drove silently in the car, both breathing heavily as they tried to comprehend what had just happened. The car was covered in dust and ash, and its two occupants were in no better shape. Hopper's left arm was cut in several places, and blood covered it and half of his face from a cut he had sustained from a piece of flying glass, along with the dust that covered him head to toe. Joyce had fared slightly better, with only minor cuts to her right leg, but she was just as dirty.

They had sprinted up the massive staircase taking the steps two at a time. Alarms had begun blaring, announcing a five minutes timer. By the time they had reach the top of the staircase, they had 3 minutes left and they were on the fourth floor. By the time they made it down to the first, they had a minute left. They had been running out the doors with 10 seconds to go, and were in the middle of the parking lot when the building had blown. Hopper had thrown her under him as the shockwave had passed over them and debris had fallen everywhere. Miraculously, they had been mostly unhurt, with only a few cuts and bruises.

Now they were speeding away from the lab and towards his cabin. He had been signalling El for the past five minutes but had gotten no responses. They pulled up outside the cabin and he did the secret knock 5 times before using his key on the normal lock. He opened the door and heard the silence that greeted him. He saw no one. He frantically looked around for any sign of his adopted daughter or her boyfriend and found nothing. Joyce suddenly handed him a piece of paper that he read three times before crumpling it in anger.

"Shit, shit, shit, shit, SHIT! I should've known they would do something stupid together. We have to go after her Joyce," he said, pulling on his coat and heading to the door.

"Hop, wait," she said. He kept walking. She tried again, still, no

response. "HOPPER!" she shouted, finally getting his attention.

"What Joyce?" he asked her with a hint of exasperation in his voice.

"We can't go after her."

"Why not?" he asked.

"We don't even know where she went Hop," she told him, touching his arm.

"Yeah I do. Chicago."

She laughed. "That was a year ago. She could have went somewhere else."

"I can't just leave my girl out there Joyce," he said, desperation creeping into his voice.

"Hopper, with those powers of hers, she'll be fine. We need to get these disks to one of those boys that will actually know how to read them. We need to get the group back together."

He hung his head. He knew she was right. "Okay, I'm gonna get cleaned up. You call those boys, Steve, and Nancy and tell them to get their asses over here as soon as possible," he went into the bathroom and shut the door as she picked up the phone and called her house first.

Jonathan picked up. "Hello?"

"Hi baby. It's me, mom," she said.

"Mom?! Where have you been! Me and Will have been worried sick."

"I'm okay. Can you get Will, Max, Lucas, and Dustin and bring them to the cabin? And also call Steve and Nancy and tell them to come too."

"Is everything alright mom?"

"It will be. Just get here as soon as possible," she said, and then she

hung up the phone. Hopper had just exited the bathroom looking much better than before. He gestured to the bathroom and she entered. She washed her arms and face and put some antiseptic and bandages on her cuts. She dusted off her clothes and went back into the living room to see Hopper making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

"I figured we could at least feed everyone lunch since it's soon that time. You hungry?"

She hadn't noticed it until now when the adrenaline was wearing off. She was ravenous and quickly took the sandwich he had offered her, wolfing it down quickly. He handed her another sandwich with a chuckle and she smiled at him before eating that one just as fast. She felt better and sat down on the couch. He brought over a beer and handed it to her. She gladly took it.

They sat in silence until they heard the secret knock. He put his bottle down and quickly went and opened it. The 4 children and 3 teens poured into the cabin. Will and Jonathan went to hug their mother while Steve and Dustin went to grab some sandwiches. Max and Dustin just sat down as hellos were exchanged between everyone. They all settled, sitting wherever they could.

"So chief, why'd you call us all here? Secret government stuff?" Harrington asked. Hopper rolled his eyes.

"Yes, actually," he said, and he saw the amused grin slide off the boy's face.

"What's wrong? And where are Mike and El?" Dustin asked, noticing the prominent lack of two party members.

"Okay. It's a long story, but to put it simply, Eleven has been having these visions for the past two weeks," he started off, but was then interrupted by the Sinclair boy.

"She hasn't said anything to us about visions," he said, and the rest of the kids nodded in agreement.

"She didn't want to worry you guys. We agreed not to tell you," he

told them.

Max put the dots together first. "Wait, did Wheeler know about them?" He nodded and all hell broke loose.

"What the shit? Why didn't he tell us?" Dustin asked.

"I can't believe her. Telling him but not us!" Lucas said, outraged.

"Hey, hey, HEY!" Hopper shouted above them, his yell silencing them. "Mike only knew because he was there when she had the first one. It woke him up."

He could see the pieces click together in Will's mind. "They night we had out sleepover. That's why they didn't want to come to the arcade. They came to tell you instead," he said, looking at Hopper for confirmation.

He nodded. "Yeah, that's right."

Nancy asked the question on everyone's mind. "Well, what did she see?"

He took a deep breath. "Brenner. He's still alive, and he has a new experiment called Twelve. She has powers like El's but she's evil. They told me she killed her parents and baby brother without remorse."

Everyone was shocked into silence. Steve broke it. "Well, that's awful and all, but why does it involve us?"

"Because of what she saw in her second vision. Brenner and this other girl and destroying all the labs around America. We don't know why, only that he said he doesn't want anyone standing in his way. We don't know if he's working alone or with the government, but we do know he's coming here for some reason. That's why we're telling you. He's coming here soon," Hopper explained.

"What are we going to do?" Jonathan asked.

Hopper pulled the three floppy disks out of his jacket pocket. "Joyce and I went back to the lab. We found a hidden room with these files

on a computer. We tried to understand them but couldn't, and we thought maybe you kids could. Unfortunately, the lab was blown up when we took them off of the computers."

"What were the files called?" Lucas asked.

Hopper looked at what he had written on the disks. "Uh, *Time Irregularities*, *Space Irregularities*, and *Theories etc.*"

"Well, we need a computer to read them, and none of us have that."

"My dad has a pretty good computer, and him and my mom are both out of town right now. We can look at the files there," Steve said, feeling good to be the hero of this task.

"Alright, everyone get into a car. We're going to Steve's."

Detroit, five hours later

They had just gotten off of the bus and were now searching for a quiet place for Eleven to go into the void and find the exact location her sister was at. They walked through the crowded streets holding each other's hand tightly. Eleven still didn't deal well with loud and crowded places, and Mike could tell she was having a hard time. He leaned over to her and whispered words of encouragement to her as she walked down a sidewalk in the middle of the city.

After about an hour of walking, they were nearing the poorer and more run down parts of the city. This meant less people and he could feel El relax beside him. They found an alley that was as quiet as they were going to get and sat down against the wall. He pulled his supercomm and a blindfold out of his back and handed the fabric to her. She wrapped it around her eyes and he turned the walkie talkie to a channel filled with static.

She concentrated on her sister's face and fell into the darkness of the void. Her eyes opened and her feet felt the water beneath her. She looked around for any sign of her sister. In the distance she saw a two figures standing by a barrel fire. She began to walk towards them and as she got closer she realized that it was indeed her sister. The man she was standing beside, however, was a stranger to her. She

reached her sister and tapped on her shoulder. Kali whirled around and saw her. "Jane. You're here."

"Yes. Where are you?" El asked.

"Stay put, I'll come and get you," she said, and before Eleven could respond, she was pulled out of the void. She yanked off the blindfold and saw that it had been Mike who had pulled her out, and for good reason. There were 4 men surrounding them. They all had long beards and were wearing dirty coats and ragged clothing underneath of them. Two of them had switchblades in their hands, and the leader of the pack had his hand in his pocket as if he was holding a gun.

"Hey there, what are you youngins doing out here all alone? It's not safe out here for people your age," the one in front said to them. His voice was low and scratchy.

"We're fine. Please go away," she said, stepping forward towards him.

"Just come with us, we won't hurt ya," he said grinning at them.

"Go. Away. Now." Mike saw her being to glare at them, and he hoped they would leave for their own sake.

"Nah, I don't want to girlie. Grab em!" he yelled, and the 4 of them sprang forward. Before they could react, Mike and Eleven each had a man grasping onto their arms, holding them in place. The ones that had Mike began to feel his face up, and the one unzipped his pants.

"He's a cute one, ain't he Carl?"

"He sure is. You want him first or shall I?"

"He's all yours pal."

Mike was struggling against their hold, but he was no match for two fully grown men. Fortunately for them, Eleven was. She had seen enough. She screamed and the 4 men flew back through the air and hit the alley walls. Mike ran over to her side and kissed her cheek, mumbling his thanks. Then men got up and pulled out guns on them.

"What the fuck was that?!"

"Go!" Eleven screamed at them, forcing herself to sound brave.

"Get them now!" the leader screamed, and they charged once more. Eleven raised her hand and broke the leader's legs. He screamed as he fell down, and his companions slowed. Suddenly, they all screamed and ran away as if they had seen a huge monster coming at them from the opposite end of the alley. As they turned around, Eleven realized it might just have been that.

"Get in," her sister said from the door of the van. They ran over and hopped in before the driver began to speed away from the scene.

"Welcome back Miss Jane," she heard Funshine say from the back of the van.

"Funshine?" Mike asked from beside her.

"Is this your boyfriend Jane?" Kali asked, looking him up and down in the darkness of the van. "I like him."

Eleven smiled as they drove off towards their hideout.

Dr. Owen's house, 3 hours earlier

Owens paced through his lavish living room. His work at the Department of Energy had paid him well, and with the hush money from his bosses last year, he had more than enough money to live out the rest of his life in luxury. That was the farthest thing from his mind at the moment however, because after making a few calls and looking at his own research, he had desperately been trying to reach Hopper for the past few hours to no avail. He had tried his house, the Byers household, and the police station, but no one knew where the Chief was. He dialed the number once more.

"Hey there Chief. I did some research, and I think I found something. A reason you know who might come back here. I can't discuss this over the phone. I need you to call me back okay? You need to know this. I-" he stopped talking as the line went dead and he heard a dial tone. He set the phone down on his receiver. Suddenly, the lights cut out, and he was left standing in near darkness, as the only light currently filtered through his closed blinds.

It was quiet, much too quiet for this time of day. He stood still, listening, and only heard his breathing. He debated his next moves carefully. He slowly began to reach around to the back of his pants. He grasped the handle of his gun, waiting. He heard a sound to his left in the hallway and he pulled the pistol out, firing off three quick shots. He stared in amazement and horror as the bullets were stopped in mid-air. He screamed as he felt his wrist crack and he dropped the gun before he felt his feet leave the ground before he slammed into the wall. He saw a girl walk into his field of vision. She was wearing an all black combat uniform. Her dark hair was up in a bun on her head. But it was the eyes that scared him the most. They were completely black, and appeared to be sunken in to the back of her head. Dark veins radiated outwards from, them, and she held a hand out to him, holding him in place.

"Well Dr. Owens. I had hoped a scientist of your renown would have joined my cause. It seems I was wrong, as you were no doubt trying to warn those pesky children about my plans?"

It couldn't be, but as he looked up at him, he saw the dark suit and white hair, and he knew the rumors were true. Owens tried to respond, but whatever the girl was doing to him prevented him from talking.

"Well, no matter. The labs have been destroyed in record time due to Twelve, and with you out of the way, there is no one to stop me. Goodbye Owens," he signaled Twelve, and she snapped her head to the side, cracking the man's neck, killing him.

"Is it time?" she asked.

Brenner nodded. "We must get to the lab. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

Steve's House, 2 hours ago.

They had been at it for 3 hours, pouring over the files and writing down everything that seemed important to the boys. Hopper and Joyce read through the files while they Dustin and Will listened, and Steve, Jonathan and Nancy had gotten pins and were putting things

onto a wall. Lucas looked for connections between the information on the board and had one of the older teens use red string to connect them. He also had the D&D manual in front of him, seeing if he could see any connections.

They finally finished going through the information on each file and they all sat in Steve's living room looking at the dozens of papers covering the wall.

"Anyone got any ideas?" Hopper asked.

"Well, there's a lot of talk about the space-time continuum, but I can't figure out why. There's a bunch of other things about the other labs in the US too."

"Spacetime-continuum?" he asked.

"Yeah, the 4 dimensional plane of time and space. Everything exists in a sequential order on this plane. It only exists in this dimension. Of course, we know the Upside Down exists, so that probably has its own space-time continuum too," Dustin explained.

"So why do they talk about it so much?" Steve asked.

"I don't know. I haven't looked at everything yet, there might be something I'm missing," Lucas said as he turned back to the wall.

"Lucas, do you think they could be talking about a tear in the space-time continuum? Maybe that's why there was all of those portals here 2 years ago. Maybe they were tears," Will suggested.

"Yeah, but that still doesn't help us with why Brenner would come back," Lucas said.

Dustin paled. "Lucas, what if the spacetime walls are weaker here. Maybe that's why the portals can be opened here and only here. Maybe there can only be tears here, in Hawkins."

Before Lucas could respond, an ear-splitting crack shattered the air. They all ran outside.

Hopper stared at the sky. "Oh, fuck."

A little ways away, the sky appeared to have been opened up. Red lighting came striking out of a growing maw of blackness. The wind was quickly picking up, and the entire sky seemed to be darkening. An unearthly howl sounded from the hole, and they saw several tendrils slither out before a large head appeared too. The crack of thunder whirled across the land, and spores rained down across the land. The hole expanded quickly, and in less than thirty seconds it had reached the edge of the town.

Will spoke first. "That's the Mind Flayer."
Joyce connected the dots in her mind. "The lab."

"It's Twelve," Hopper said, a grim look on his face. "Come on, we need to get to town!" he shouted above the sound of the gusts of wind and cracks of thunder. They raced to their cars. "I hope to god El gets here soon."

Detroit, Present Time

"Why have you come back Jane?" Kali asked her.

Her and her crew plus Mike and Eleven were sitting around an old and dirty table. They were seated in an old warehouse. 3 or 4 lights lit the building, a few of them flashing occasionally as they sat and talk. Funshine had made them all tea, and Mike and Eleven were clutching the mugs to warm their hands as it was freezing in the warehouse.

"Papa is back. I need your help Kali," Eleven told her.

"Can't you just break his neck or something?" she asked her, getting a laugh out of the others.

"He has another experiment. Twelve. She's ruthless Kali. She killed her own parents and has destroyed entire buildings," to her credit, her voice didn't crack when she mentioned Twelve's parents. "I can't defeat her on my own."

"I don't think I'd be much help Jane. Even if I wanted to that is. How do you even know he's coming back?" she asked.

"I've been having visions Kali. He said he is. I know he is."

"I'm sorry Jane, but no. You said it yourself, he's dead."

"But now he isn't Kali!" Eleven was becoming annoyed with her. She had been sure she would help. Kali just sat there observing her, and before she could respond, El noticed something. "Where's the boy you were with? I saw him in the void."

"Ah, I had been meaning to introduce you two. Brett, could you come here?" she called over towards the offices. A boy who appeared to be in his early twenties appeared out of one and walked towards them.

"What do you want Kali?" his voice was low and rough, much too rough for his age.

"This is Jane. She's like us."

Mike stared open mouthed at her.

"Like us?" Eleven asked.

Kali nodded at Brett and he pulled back his sleeve.

Four.

I'm really happy with how this extra long chapter turned out personally and I hope you enjoy it! I'm thinking there will be one more chapter in this story and then it will be done, but there could possibly be two more. The next chapter in my other story will be out either tomorrow or the next day most likely. Also three cheers for Season 3 being green lit! See you next time!

8. Apocalypse

Little warning, this chapter is much darker and more serious than any other before. There are some deaths in this one, so if writing about gore and blood (it's not too graphic but it's there) isn't something you're into, proceed at your own risk.

Hawkins Lab, 3 hours ago.

The hum of a helicopter's rotors began as a quiet sound far off in the distance and grew louder and louder until the residents of Hawkins could have sworn it was in their backyard. Those who looked out their windows at that moment would have seen a sleek, jet-black helicopter cutting through the air before disappearing behind the trees. It landed and four heavily armed men exited it and set up a perimeter around the doors. Then came a well-dressed man with fine white hair. He observed the rubble and fires for a moment before making a gesture with his hand.

A girl dressed in all black combat armor hopped out of the doors and followed the man to the edge of the rubble while the four soldiers followed closely behind them. She seemed to suck in all of the light around her, creating a permanent shadow that emanated from her body. She saw the guards spare her a nervous glance or two as they walked, but she paid no attention to them after that. This would be her moment. She could feel the power coursing through her veins as she stepped upon the ground, transferring it there and then back up into her once more, relishing in the feeling it gave her. She rarely got nosebleeds anymore, as it seemed the more she used her powers, the stronger she got.

The man held up a hand and the four soldiers stopped. She continued to follow him into the debris, as she knew the gesture hadn't been for her. The smoke tickled at her eyes and nose but she paid no attention to those feelings. Discomfort was merely the feeling of a mortal, and she knew she was no such thing. She could end a life with the flick of her neck, or make a building crumble by pointing out her hand and concentrating on the cinder blocks turning to dust. She could even control energy itself at times, throwing bolts of electricity into the hearts of her enemies, or setting items ablaze should they need to be

destroyed.

The man stopped and she came up to his side. He surveyed the area around them. They were standing in the middle of what used to be Hawkins Laboratory before it had been demolished. He gazed around before pointing towards the sky, and she knew it was time.

"Twelve, today is a day that will be remembered throughout history. It will be known as the day us humans learned of the forces beyond our world. Greater forces that can show us true power! Forces such as yourself, the true rulers of our time. Now go, and fulfill our destiny!" he yelled, backing away to give her space.

She raised both of her hands towards the sky and began to channel the energy through her and outwards. She could feel the energy start from her feet and course through her body, coming up her legs and into her abdomen before entering her arms and coming out her fingertips. It was a feeling that none other she had ever felt could match, it made her feel invincible. The ground began to shake around her, and she saw Brenner hold onto a broken metal beam for support. Blood began to pour out of her nose and ears as she put everything she had into her efforts. Dark clouds began to gather above them, and she could feel the electricity in the air as small sparks began to emanate from her fingers. Her body began to levitate and Brenner stared in awe as with a tremendous crack, the sky appears to split open as red forks of lightning sprang from the increasingly large gap. He heard the howls of dozens of creatures and the chitters of smaller ones, but one extremely loud one topped them all. He knew it must be the beast that reigned over the dimension.

Twelve slowly stopped using her powers. Her part was done, as the hole was widening on its own now. She had unlocked the door, and now it was letting itself into their home. She stepped back to meet Brenner to admire their work. Smaller portals were opening in the ground, and she could see the limbs and snouts of creatures slowly poking their way up through. That hadn't been an exact part of the plan, but her explosion of power had opened them as well.

Brenner had a look of madness in his eyes as she turned to look at Twelve. "This is better than I ever imagined! With this, we'll be able to do whatever we want. The power in this dimension is the same as

the power in you. It's stronger than anything we have here, and soon we'll be able to harness it!"

She nodded in agreement as the monsters began to appear from the holes in the ground. Red lightning was striking all around them, giving the air a metallic taste. She saw the shadow monster beginning to come through the ever-widening portal, sticking its tendrils down into Hawkins. Its head appeared only a few seconds later, and she heard the creature roar as it descended towards the ground. It landed maybe 50 yards away from them and observed the two of them standing on the ground. It was enormous, at least 50 feet tall, most likely more. It cocked its head to the side, as if it was determining what threat level they were.

In the blink of an eye, 2 tendrils were streaking towards her and Brenner as fast as they could, and she barely managed to summon a power blast to knock them away in time. She looked towards Brenner. Hadn't he thought of a way to contain this beast? The fear in his eyes suggested he hadn't. The tendrils kept coming, and she kept batting them away as her and Brenner began to run backwards towards the helicopter. She was draining fast from the relentless barrage of attacks from the monster, and was beginning to tire.

"Twelve!" Brenner called, and that moment of distraction was enough time for the shadow monster to take her. She felt the tendril engulf her as several more entered her nose, mouth, and ears. She could feel it moving around inside her, going through her bloodstream, making sure to touch each and every cell in her body, infecting her. It entered her mind, and suddenly she could hear a voice beside her own internal monologue.

"Kill him. Help me," it said, urging her to raise her hand and crush Brenner's skull.

"No!" she yelled, grabbing her head, trying to force the thing from her mind. The creatures had stalled, observing the struggle in front of them. Brenner and his men were silent too. In fact, it was if everything had stopped to watch the intense struggle of two great powers happening in this parking lot.

"Do as I command!" it shouted inside her head, trying to force her to

do it's bidding.

"No. I won't!" she screamed. She began to bleed from her eyes as they took on a pure black color. She was crying, the salty tears mixing with the metallic blood.

"*You are mine...*" it whispered.

"No, no, no," she mumbled as she collapsed to the ground, but she couldn't fight it anymore. She felt it take over, and suddenly it was in charge, and her voice was pushed to the back of her mind. She let out a final scream and shockwave of power, and then it was silent.

"Twelve?" Brenner asked, slowly approaching her. She paid no attention to the man. She felt better than she ever had before. Her powers suddenly felt like they had increased a hundredfold, and it was as if there was pure electricity flowing through her veins, not blood. Her body stood and faced the man. Her master.

"Are you okay?" he asked, laying a hand on her shoulder.

He would be her master no longer. The shadow monster was her master now. She sent him flying back with a tiny flick of her head, and he slammed into the side of the helicopter before crashing to the ground. The soldiers began to fire at her, but she raised a hand and the bullets disintegrate before her. She raised her other hand and pulled the rifles from their hands. She grinned at the looks of terror on their faces. This was *fun*.

"Go," she said, flicking a finger forward. The storm started up once more with a newfound fury. The lightning crashed and set the forests ablaze, and the booms of thunder shook the ground. The creatures let out a collective howl as they charged forward past her, running into Brenner and his men. They tore into their flesh, raking their claws through it like it was butter. One of the soldiers screamed as a dog-like creature used its petal-like mouth to open his neck, and blood gushed from the wound. Brenner tried to run but was tackled by a bipedal version of the dog creature, who raked a claw along his back, opening 3 long cuts.

He looked back at Twelve. "Help me!" he called, but she simply

laughed an unearthly sound.

"You are no longer in charge," she said, her voice seeming to be quiet and loud all at once, echoing throughout the land. His final words were silenced when the creature tore his head from his neck. She pointed down the road. "That way," and the creatures began running towards the town.

She turned back to the shadow monster and spoke to it through the connection they now shared in their mind. *"The portal cannot go past this town. What do you plan on doing about that?"*

"Once this place is conquered, we will focus on spreading. There are other ways to spread than the portals," it said.

She nodded and began walking towards the town at a leisurely pace while the monster stayed beneath the portal. She would be its tendrils, its weapon. She would subdue all who opposed them here, and then they would conquer this petty world.

Hawkins Police Station, present time

The town was in chaos. In no time at all, the portal had spread over the entire town, covering it in an unnatural shadow from the darkness above. Fires raged where the furious red lightning had struck, and it continued to come down, sending loud crashes throughout the town, shaking the ground. Small earthquakes kept occurring every few minutes, and several buildings had already been destroyed when they had reached the town around 2 hours ago. They had parked in front of the station and were moving tree limbs out of the way when they encountered their first Demo-dog. It had jumped out from a bush and had managed to cut Will's leg before Steve had bashed its head in with his bat. Hopper had picked up Will and they all ran into the station where they still were. He and Callahan had blockaded the door and he had disinfected and bandaged the boy's leg as best he could. Now, they waited.

They had spent the first hour or so recounting everything that had happened to them the past 2 years. Will's abduction by the Demogorgon, the Upside Down, Eleven, Will's possession, the Mind Flayer, all of it. Hopper figured it wouldn't matter anymore if he told

them or not, since they were likely to die soon anyway. Outside of the station, the creatures roamed the streets, hunting and killing anyone who got in their way. Twelve was nowhere to be seen, but on their way in they had seen the Mind Flayer hovering over near the lab's remains.

Currently, Hopper and his two deputies were trying to make contact to the outside world on their radios and phones, but every channel had been filled with static, and the phones had been taken out by the electrical storm that was still raging outside. The wind had picked up as well, and they had heard several trees crash down, and the ground shook almost constantly now, with the small rumbles gowing and then fading after a few minutes.

Steve was practicing his swings in the corner while Nancy, Joyce, Jonathan, and Will all huddled in the corner talking quietly amongst themselves. Lucas, Max, and Dustin were in another area of the room with the D&D manual, desperately looking for anything they could use to help them, any connection between this Armageddon and the game. They poured through the pages, reading every detail there was, but they could find nothing.

Another crash of thunder reverberated throughout the room, shaking glasses and pictures on the wall as Hopper walked out of his office. He had a look of defeat on his face.

"Could you reach anyone?" Joyce asked hopefully.

He shook his head. "Phones are fried and the radio is just static."
"Well we have to do something!" Steve said. "We can't just let our home be destroyed!" and even as he said it, they all heard the crumble of another building falling down due to the shaking.

"Well pretty boy, what do you want to do about it? Charge at a crazy and evil telekinetic girl with your bat? Or how about the inter-dimensional shadow demon hovering in the sky? Want to charge that as well?" Hopper asked sarcastically.

"Well, no. But I can't stand just sitting here!" he yelled at him, bringing everyone's focus onto the conversation.

Hopper walked over and grabbed him by the shoulders. "Listen, none of us want to sit here. But unfortunately, we can't do anything about it. We have to wait and hope that El gets back here with help."

He went quiet after that and went back to swinging his bat around in the corner. Hopper went over to Joyce and whispered a few words to her. She stood up and wrapped her arms around him, kissing him on the cheek. Suddenly, his radio crackled to life.

"We... coming... hold... just hold on!" It was El. She had managed to break through the static. Everyone cheered and Hopper grabbed his radio to respond, but she had broken the connection. He went over to the armory and enlisted Powell and Callahan to help him bring out all of the guns and ammo they had. He handed Nancy a rifle with several extra magazines, as she was an excellent shot. He loaded a shotgun and threw it to Jonathan. He took the assault rifle he had kept from last year, and his officers armed themselves with shotguns as well. Steve and Joyce both got pistols.

"Hey! We want guns too," Dustin said, and he looked over to see the 4 kids looking at him expectantly.

"Listen, none of you have any experience with guns, and these aren't the most safe conditions to teach you in!" he yelled over the howls of the wind, as a gust was passing through.

"Exactly. It's not safe, so we should have guns!" he argued.

They could have gone back and forth for a while, but Hopper was stressed enough as it was. He quickly loaded a magazine and handed the pistol to Max, as he trusted her to be the most level-headed with it. He looked her dead in the eyes. "This stays in your belt with the safety on unless it is absolutely necessary to use it. If we have to leave this building, I want all you kids behind me and the others at all times. Got it?" he asked, and in return he got several nods.

As he backed away from Max, the ground began to shake with a fury unlike he had experienced before. He yelled at them to get under the desks and they huddled underneath to wait out the quake. The leftmost wall crumbled before their eyes, and they finally saw outside into Hawkins after 2 hours.

The fires had covered the town with a smoky haze, lighting flashed almost every seconds, giving the world a red tint more often than not. The wind was blowing so fiercely that some trees were almost completely bent over, and there were spores everywhere. They all quickly covered their mouths with their shirts or whatever they could find around them.

"Come on, we have to get to better cover!" Hopper yelled, standing up from under the desk. He began to move towards the new hole in the wall, but before he made it there, some Demogorgon-like creature leapt through the hole. He raised his rifle and fired twice, hitting it and killing it. More charged through the hole, and a hailstorm of bullets began to rain from their barrels.

Detroit, 10 minutes ago

"Kali, what can he do?" El asked, looking at Four.

"Brett, a demonstration?" Kali asked, looking up at the young man.

He rolled his eyes but stuck a hand towards a flameless barrel. A bright blue flame left his fingertips and set the paper and wood inside it on fire.

Mike let out a gasp of wonder. "So he has the ability of pyrokinesis?" he asked, drawing confused looks from the others. "He can make fire with his mind," he explained.

He nodded but remained silent. El looked at her with desperation in her eyes. "Kali, with our powers combined, we could surely defeat Twelve! We have to save my town. Please," she begged, but Kali still shook her head.

"He can't control his powers that will normally. That's why we're are living all the way out here, so he doesn't set anything important on fire," she said.

Eleven was about to respond but felt her head become heavy all of the sudden. "El, are you okay?" Mike asked, and she tried to look at him, but instead felt blood drip down her upper lip as she slipped into the blackness of the void.

She opened her eyes to images of utter destruction. She saw the movie theater's roof be demolished by a falling oak tree, roads split in half by earthquakes, and she saw the police station, thankfully still standing. Joyce and her Papa's car were outside. She ran over, splashing through the water until she reached the door and threw it open. She quickly looked around saw that everyone was there, although Will's leg appeared to be injured. She saw Hopper talking to Joyce, so she walked over and began to speak, but they couldn't hear her. She saw his radio and got an idea. She focused on it and began to speak, "We're coming, just hold on Hop! Just hold on!" she yelled, and felt a wave of relief wash over her as they let out a cheer at her words. She was about to speak again when they dissolve into smoke and she was whisked away to a new scene.

It was the girl. She looked very different now. Her skin was pale, almost grey in color and her eyes were now entirely black, with dark veins crisscrossing her entire body. She seemed to be cloaked in shadows, and tendrils not unlike the Mind Flayer's came from her backs, wrapping around her. She was walking up a path strewn with leaves towards a house. Eleven's breath froze in her lungs. She knew that house. Time flashed forward and she saw Twelve choking a man. A woman was slumped in a corner, blood trickling down from a cut on her head. A young girl was trying to wake her, saying her name and shaking the lifeless body again and again, crying out for her mom to wake up. The man's face was red, and tears streamed down his face.

"I know you've hid the girl before. Where is she?!" Twelve screamed, and El clasped her hands over her ears, as the voice was loud and echoed off the walls, seeming to come from everywhere at once.

"I-I don't know who you're talking about!" he said, and she picked him up and slammed him into a wall. He crashed to the floor and managed to raise his head to look at the demon in his kitchen. A line of blood came down from his mouth, dripping onto the tiles.

"Jane! Where is she?!"

"Mike's friend? What? Wh-why do you want her?" he asked, his voice gurgling due to the blood in his lungs.

"Where. Is. she?" the calm tone was somehow worse than the screaming.

"Hopper. She lives with Hopper, the police chief," he said weakly, hoping she would spare him and Holly.

"Thank you," she said, snapping his neck. She turned to the crying girl on the ground. "You'll see them soon enough my dear," she said, a smile on her face that seemed to unnaturally stretch from ear to ear. She walked out of the house and threw a hand up behind her. Half a dozen red lightning bolts struck the house, and it exploded as the heater was ignited and went up in flames.

El screamed in horror, but before she could react any more, she was suddenly transported back to Hopper. They were outside the police station now, viciously fighting off dozens of monsters as they made their way towards an intact house down the street. She cried out and reached for them but her vision went black.

Someone was shaking her. "El?! Eleven?! Wake up, please!" It was Mike. She opened her eyes and wiped the tears away to see Brett, Kali, and Mike standing over her. She sat up and tried to comprehend what she had just seen.

"Mike, she's in Hawkins. The Mind Flayer possessed her, she's even more powerful. We have to go back, she's looking for Hopper. They're in danger," she said. His eyes widened.

"Okay, we'll leave now," he said, pulling her to her feet.

She turned to face Kali once more. "I know I ran away, and I'm sorry. But my home and family are in danger, and I need your help. Please sister," she said, and Kali seemed to think, but before she answered, Brett did first.

"I'm going," he said, and before Kali could interrupt him he held up his hand. "No, just stop. I was too late to have my own family, so I'm going to help Eleven save hers."

She sighed. "Fine, then I'm coming too. Get in the van. We can get there faster if we take out own transportation," she said. Eleven

nodded and ran into the van, settling down as Kali hopped into the driver's seat and roared out of the warehouse.

Hawkins, 3 and a half hours later.

Hopper slammed the door shut and breathed a sigh of relief. They were safe, for moment at least. They had already lost Callahan to a Demogorgon, and his arm was bleeding heavily. Steve had a black eye from some sort of smaller creature that had jumped at his face. Joyce's leg had gotten stabbed and she was using Jonathan for support. Max had a gash on her face from a flying tree branch, and Dustin had a gash along his face as well from a Demo-Dog. They had yet to come across Twelve yet, for which he was grateful. They sat around the darkened living room and began to count their remaining ammo and tend to their wounds as best as they could. He got a bedsheet and made tourniquets and bandages for him and Joyce, and the kids used antiseptic ointment and bandages on their cuts.

He was just relieved most of them had stayed alive this long. None of the kids had any idea if their families were still alive, and they had seen dozens of wrecked cars and bodies on the streets. Even more were probably buried under the houses that had collapsed or burned in the houses that caught on fire.

He finished tying the tourniquet onto Joyce's leg and began to reload his magazine for his rifle. Once he was finished with that, he loaded his pistol and checked with everyone else. They were almost out of shotgun shells, but had a decent amount of normal bullets for the pistols and his rifle. He was staring around the room, wondering how much longer they could last without El.

"Hopper?" Joyce asked, and he realized his name had been being called for the past few seconds. He snapped out of his thoughts and turned to her.

"Yeah?"

"Is she going to be here soon? I'm not sure how much longer we can go on like this," she said, gesturing around the room. Max and Lucas had fallen asleep on each other's shoulders almost immediately, and Steve was holding Dustin as close as he could. Powell was sitting in

the corner staring at the wall. He had been hit hard by Callahan's death, but Hopper would talk to him later, as unfortunately they had bigger concerns right now. Jonathan and Nancy were currently sandwiching Will in between them, whispering calming words to him. They were all battered and bruised and dirty.

He grabbed Joyce and pulled her closer to him before passionately kissing her as hard as he could. She wrapped her arms around him and returned the kiss. Years of built up tension were poured into the kiss, and they finally separated. "What was that for?" she asked.

"Just in case Joyce, just in case," he said.

Steve had gotten up a few minutes ago and wandered back out of the kitchen with granola bars and bottles of water. They all grabbed them and ate and drank, replenishing some of their lost energy. The kids and teens slept while Hopper and Joyce kept watch. During this time he went over to Powell and talked to him. After a few minutes, they were laughing quietly over stories they told each other about Callahan's antics.

After a half an hour, everyone roused when a particularly strong boom of thunder shook the house. Fortunately, this meant they were all awake when the next earthquake began, and they rushed out into the street. Almost immediately, they began to hear growls as the house they had just been in caved in the middle. They formed a circle with the kids in the middle and began to move slowly up the street. They hunkered close to the ground to prevent the wind from blowing them over. A dog jumped out of the shadows and Joyce blasted it with her shotgun, splattering its guts all over the ground. An adult Demogorgon-like creature ran up from behind and Hopper got this one with 4 quick shots to the chest. Whatever it was, it didn't possess the strength or teleportation powers of the original Demogorgon, much to their collective relief.

Halfway up the street and a dozen kills later, they were nearing a three car crash, which was blocking their way. They began to move around it when they heard the roar of an engine above the wind and thunder. Suddenly, a van swung into view back the way they had come, and it sped up when the driver saw their group in the middle of the street. It wobbled in the wind but the driver was skilled,

expertly weaving around debris in the road. It stopped about ten feet away, and the side door opened. Out stepped Eleven, Mike, a girl hopper assumed was Kali, and a young man who appeared to be in his 20s. He smiled at his adoptive daughter, but her grin was quickly replaced with a face of horror and yelled something she couldn't hear above the wind and pointed.

While they had been distracted by the reappearance of Eleven, a new type of creature with long spikes instead of hands had snuck behind them and was mid-leap towards Dustin. Hopper raised his rifle, but he knew he would be too late. Dustin screamed and curled up, but never felt the claw pierce him. Instead, he felt someone shove him out of the way and he fell towards the ground. He heard the wet sound of skin being split open and a surprised sound from the person who had pushed him. Nancy screamed, sounding hysterical. Dustin didn't want to look, but he knew he had too.

The clawed monster had shoved his spike through Steve's abdomen and raised him above the ground. Blood glistened on the end that had emerged from his back. He looked down in surprise, as if he didn't even feel the pain. Dustin saw all of this in slow motion, being lit from behind by flashes of red forks of lightning.

Then everything sped up. Eleven screamed and sent the monster flying back 50 feet into a building, crushing it before the newcomer sent a stream of blue fire at it, setting it ablaze and killing it. Steve fell to the ground and Dustin caught him, catching his head before it hit the ground. He glanced at the wound, noting how bad it was. In seconds Nancy, Jonathan, and the five other party members surrounded them while the adults kept watch. Nancy was crying as she held his head in her lap. Hell, they were all crying, even El, who had only met him a few times.

Dustin pressed his hands to the wound, trying in vain to stop the bleeding. "Don't worry Steve, you-you'll be okay," he said, his words shaky as he tried to breathe.

He laughed. It was gurgly as blood filled his lungs. "I always knew you shithheads would kill me someday," he said, but he had tears in his eyes too as he began to succumb to the pain. Everyone knew he was joking and laughed through their tears.

"Steve, you're going to be fine," Nancy said, running her hand through his hair.

"Nance, we both know that's not true. I want you and Jonathan to take care of these assholes for me. Even though you'll never be as good a babysitter as me," he said, and everyone laughed again.

He took Jonathan's hand. "Take care of her for me, will ya?" he asked, and Jonathan nodded, tears running down his nose.

Steve could feel his life slipping away faster as blood continued to flow from his wounds. "Dustin?"

"Yeah Steve?"

"Remember all that good advice I told you. I expect to see you with a girlfriend in five years or less," he said, weakly patting his hand. Dustin gripped it hard.

He could see a white light beginning to form above him. "*Huh, so it's true,*" he thought, almost laughing at himself. "I love you little shitheads," he said, before breathing one last shaky breath and falling still. His hand slipped out from Dustin's and the younger boy began to sob, throwing himself onto Max, who held him close as she cried too. The rest of the party surrounded them and began to hug as well.

As much as Hopper didn't want to interrupt them, he knew they had to move. "Guys, we gotta go. Now," he said, and they all reluctantly got up and piled into the van. Hopper nodded at Joyce and they picked up Steve's body, wrapping it in a blanket and putting it into the trunk. It was a tight fit in the van, but with people sitting on other's laps, they all managed to fit and the van started and drove off with a groan, Kali driving once more.

"El, do you know where Twelve is?" Hopper asked her as the rest of them cried in various states of hysteria in the van over the boy's death.

She nodded. "The police station," she said.

"Kali, follow my instructions, you're gonna drop us off at a house up here, and then you, El, fireboy, and me are going to stop that freak,"

he told her, and she nodded. After a few minutes they reached an intact house and all of them moved into the cellar. Him and Joyce moved the body again into a corner and he kissed her goodbye before rejoining the three superhumans in the van. He nodded and she drove off.

Eleven had a look of darkness on her face Hopper had never seen before. "Let's go kill that motherfucker," she said, and any other time he would have reprimanded her for her language, but now he found he only nodded in solemn agreement.

Sooooooooo, that happened. To be honest I never intended for that to go down as it did, but I had a dream last night about it and added it in. I hope I gave his character a good death, I feel like it had a good impact. I was thinking about this the other day. Season 2 was darker than season 1, so if that progression continues I think we may see some major character deaths in Season 3. I mean you can only have your group face enormous threats so many times with no casualties before there has to be one or else it feels boring. At least that's how I see it. Next chapter should be the last, and either that will have an epilogue or the one after it will be the epilogue. If you feel the need for some fluff now, read my other story! No deaths or sadness, just pure fluffiness. See you for the final chapter!

9. Every Beginning had an End

Eleven stared at the destruction as they drove towards the police station. The entire town was in ruins. They had to divert down different streets or alleys several times, as the ones they had been driving on were either cracked in half or covered with debris from shattered buildings. Fires burned everywhere, caused by the destructive red lightning and fueled by the strong winds. Embers, ash, and spores filled the air, and along with the portal covered sky, covered the town in an unnatural twilight. Vines were now covering some buildings as smaller portals opened inside houses and on trees, letting more of the Upside Down into their world. Everything seemed to be drained of color as it began to take on the grey hue of the Upside Down.

She saw the high school where she had had hopes of living a semi-normal life. Half of the west wing was gone and the east wing was on fire. She saw the ice cream shop Mike had taken her after school her first week, where she had fallen in love with the cold and creamy treat. Blood covered the windows and walls, as if a slaughter had taken place on the inside.

She had seen so much death today. Bodies covered the ground, some of them still being feasted upon by the creatures. She teared up as she thought of Steve's sacrifice to save Dustin. She hadn't known him all that well, yet the few times she had interacted with him, he had been funny and patient with her, answering all of her questions. She thought of baby Holly and Mike's parents, their lives taken all too soon by that evil demon who had started all of this suffering. She felt even worse about it, as she had not told Mike when it happened, as she wasn't sure he would have been able to function if he knew that information.

"Friends don't lie," she heard herself think, but she shook the thought away. Hopper had told her that sometimes you have to not tell someone something or even lie to make them feel better, so that's what she had done. She could tell him later.

As they got closer to the police station, she began to see more and more signs of decay. Vines covered nearly everything in sight, and it

was much darker. It was almost as if Hawkins was being transformed into the Upside Down. They got out of the van to approach on foot. Hopper figured that they should at least try to have the element of surprise. They carefully stepped around the vines as best as they could, making sure to get grabbed accidentally. She glanced around them and noticed a bright red bulb glowing in a house to their left. It was unlike anything she had seen before, but before she could go and investigate, Hopper grabbed her and pulled her close, whispering the plan to her, and she forgot about the bulb.

He and Four would come in down the left street while she and Kali came down the right. Kali would try to use her powers to make Twelve see duplicates of them all, so she would be confused and not know which to hit. Now that she was possessed by the Mind Flayer however, she wasn't sure if she would be able to influence her mind anymore. El and Four would be the heavy hitters, throwing everything they had at her. Hopper was there with his rifle, and he would be trying to distract her with bullets and blocking them instead of the stronger attacks from the superhumans.

They split up and began to sneak towards the station. El could see an enormous amount of decay there, and there seemed to be a permanent red glow emanating from the windows. She could see the girl now, standing front of the station with the demon-like grin on her face. She knew they were coming. She and Kali crouched behind an upturned car and looked over to Hopper and Brett some ways away. They nodded, and El stood up, throwing a blast at Twelve, and the battle begun.

Abandoned house, Hawkins Downtown

The basement was silent except for the quiet sounds of the wind and thunderstorms raging above their head. The ground had been shaking so long by now most of them didn't even realize it anymore. There were less spores and ash down here as well, as the door had been shut and the house was still standing. They would occasionally hear a howl from somewhere above, but no creatures bashed against the locked door above.

Dustin and Nancy were over by Steve's body. Now that the wound had been covered and the blood from his mouth cleaned away, he

looked peaceful, as if he was just sleeping, and in a few hours he'd wake up, call them his little shitheads, and then take them out for ice cream.

But that wouldn't happen. He would never wake up again. Never ruffle Dustin's hair again. Never drive them places or hang out with them again. It was hitting everyone hard but none more than Dustin or Max. He had been the missing father figure in their lives, always there to give advice or deal with their problems. Max sat in a corner, silently rocking herself as Lucas held her close to him, and Dustin cried silently over at his body with Nancy.

Jonathan and Joyce were sitting on a couch with the foreheads together, talking quietly under their voices. Mike couldn't hear what they were saying as he and Will sat across from them on a chair, studying the D&D manual for anything that could help them. He tried to focus on what Will was saying to him.

"So, the Mind Flayer can take over people's minds right? And make them do things like spying. Well, what if it possessed Twelve and is amplifying her powers somehow. Maybe that's how it plans to spread beyond Hawkins?" he asked, waiting for Mike's thoughts on his hypothesis.

Mike thought it over for some time. It made sense. The girl was already evil, and with the Mind Flayer controlling her, it being such a powerful entity, it would make sense that the girl's powers would also be amplified. "Is there any kind of monster that relates to that?" he asked. They had gotten lucky with the Demogorgon and Mind Flayer having D&D counterparts, so maybe it could happen again.

Will nodded. "Just one," he said pointing to it on the worn-out page. "A Mind Flayer Lich. It is an outcast of the other Mind Flayers, and using magic to enhance its powers."

"So Twelve is basically the Lich then?" Mike asked. It wasn't a perfect analogy, but it worked well enough.

"I think so, and here is the really interesting thing. Whenever a Lich is in play, it spawns in several red bulbs," he said excitedly.

Mike was completely lost. Even as the Dungeon Master, he didn't know every monster's rules perfectly. "So?" he asked.

"Well, they help it spread its magic further, but if they are destroyed, it weakens them."

After a few seconds Will saw Mike's face break into one of surprise. "So, if these exist in the real world too, and we find and destroy them, it'll hurt it?"

"I think so. We could use fire, like you guys did with the vines last year."

Mike jumped up from his seat and clapped his hands together twice, getting everyone's attention. He motioned for them to come closer and once they were all sitting near him, he cleared his throat. "I think me and Will found a way to help El and her friends fight this," he said. Lucas, Joyce, Nancy, and Jonathan all perked up at his words, but to his astonishment, Dustin and Max stayed quiet, looking even more sad at his words. He had expected Dustin to jump up and begin to make plans for another adventure.

"Mike, we can't," he said, shocking everyone.

Max nodded in agreement. "We-we already lost Steve. We can't afford to lose anyone else today."

Mike looked around to his friends for support. "Guys, El is in danger. Twelve is super powerful and we might have away to even the playing field a little bit," he said, glaring at his two friends. Yeah, Steve had died, but so had a bunch of others, and maybe El or Hopper if they weren't careful.

"Mike, I just don't think we can. Do you want to die too?" Dustin asked.

"Of course not, but I don't want El to die either. A party member-"

"Requires assistance. I know."

Mike looked at his friend and saw the pain in his eyes. "Dustin," he started softly. "Steve came to your assistance, don't you think he

would like it if his sacrifice wasn't for nothing? If we stop her and the Mind Flayer, this will all be over for good. "

Dustin wiped the tears away from his eyes. "Alright. Let's kick their asses then," he said, and everyone cheered and began to get their stuff. Joyce and Nancy would be staying behind with his body, but everyone else began to go. They got all their ammo and reloaded their guns, making sure they had every last round. They got knives from the kitchen upstairs, and found two gas cans in the garage, which they would need to make these things burn, if they existed. They assembled at the doorway and were about to go out before Dustin ran downstairs and came up a few seconds later holding the nail bat.

"Let's do it," he said, and they stepped into the storm. From the time they had spent in the basement, things had only gotten worse. The winds had picked up even more, and they had to walk hunched over to avoid being blown away. Spores and ash were so thick in the air the visibility was next to nothing.

Mike called out to Will as loud as he could to be heard over the roaring wind. "Where will these things be?" he asked.

"Probably near Twelve. Near the police station. They don't hide or anything and they emit a bright red glow, so they should be easy to spot!" he called back. After finding a street sign, they got their bearings and headed towards the station. As they got closer, the noticed how it began to look more and more like the Upside Down. Vines began to snake around the ground everywhere, making them take each step cautiously. It also began to get darker and everything had a sheen glistening of slime on it.

They heard a growl and stopped in their tracks. A few yards in front of them, two Demo-Dogs had walked out of an alley and were sniffing the air, as if they were searching for their group. Callahan and Jonathan moved forward a little before hitting each one with a blast, killing them. They waved the kids forwards and entered the house. The downstairs was clear, but upstairs in the half destroyed bedroom, Lucas found one. It was at least 6 feet tall and bright red and glowing. It pulsed as if it was breathing, and emitted a low growling sound. Jonathan and Mike each took a gas can and pour the

gasoline around the base of the the bulb and then some on the top. They stepped back and Jonathan pulled out a lighter from his pocket.

"I sure hope this works," he said, chucking the lighter onto the bulb, setting it ablaze.

Police Station, Present Time

Eleven crouched next to Kali behind a broken brick wall, wincing as she heard another bolt of lightning hit the other side of the wall, blackening it and chipping little bits of it off. She looked over at her sister, noting the blood on her face and how she was covered in dirt, breathing heavily. El knew she didn't look any better, as she was bleeding from a cut on her arm and was just as tired and dirty.

"You weren't kidding Jane. This girl does mean business. It seems like Brenner got what he wanted after all of this time," her sister said as she projected an image of Brett running across open ground. The trick was successful, and she heard a howl as the bolt of lightning hit the illusion and evaporated.

Somewhere across the street, she heard Hopper let off a few rounds at the girl before most likely ducking back down as she sent a car flying at his positions. She then heard the roar of flames come from Four, and then a scream as they connected, burning the other girl. She cried out and El felt a shock wave get sent out through the ground, knocking her to her face. Seething in anger, she stood up and through a car directly at the girl, and since she was still distracted by her brun, it connected directly, showing her backwards. She got up, her left arm bent at an impossible angle, but she showed no signs of pain as she sent another bolt of lightning at Eleven, who barely managed t get out of the way in time.

Hopper ran across the gap as Brett sent a fireball at her. He slid into place next to her and grasped her leg with his hand. "You okay kid?" he asked.

"Yes. You?"

"Tired but still kicking," he said, and she looked at is legs which happened to be very still. "It's an expression. It means I'm still alive

and okay," he said, and a few seconds later he began to laugh, and she joined him. Here he was fighting a possessed girl with powers from another dimension along with three other enhanced persons with powers he would never understand, and he was giving El a speech lesson.

"Guys! If you are done joking around, Twelve is still alive!" they heard Kali yell, and their attention turned back to the battle. Brett was currently locked in an engagement with Twelve, his fire stream connecting with her lightning.

"I'm going to make her see 10 different versions of him running around in a few seconds in an attempt to confuse her. If it succeeds, I want you and Brett to throw everything you have at this girl. We need to end this!" she yelled, and they both nodded in agreement. On three, Kali sent the images out, and the girl widely looked around at the several Brett's running around her. She began to shoot bolts of lightning at them, but was so panicked she missed every single shot. Eleven quickly sent a concussive blast towards her as the real Brett sent two long streams of blue fire towards her. They both connected and she was sent flying backwards. They breathed a sigh of relief, thinking it was finally over.

They heard the sounds of rubble creaking as she moved it out of her way. Her neck and arms and legs were all obviously broken, but she still stumbled towards them. She was covered in severe burns, and her black eyes were lifeless as she screamed and raised her arms. But suddenly, she fell over, and began to cry out in obvious pain.

One block away

They had just lit their third bulb on fire, and as they walked out of the house, they noticed an immediate change in the atmosphere. The wind seemed to die down a bit and the ground shook a little less.

"Do you think it's working?" Dustin asked.

"I don't know. Hopefully," Mike said, looking in the direction of where El was.

Just as fast as everything had calmed down a little, everything

suddenly grew ten times. Worse. Mike was blown off of his feet when the wind suddenly increased tenfold, and hit the ground hard, bruising his left side. Everyone else was in similar states as they fell down due to the ground shaking or the wind blowing them off of their feet. Lightning sparked across the sky and struck the ground with a fury they had never seemed before. A cry seemed to split the air, and just as quickly as it had started, the storm ended. The ground stopped quaking, no more lightning sparked from the clouds, and the wind fell silent. The spores and ash remained and the portal was still open, but the elements had calmed.

They all stared at each other, wondering if it was over.

"Is... is it done?" Will asked.

Mike didn't answer. He just began to run over to the station, hoping he would find a living El and a dead Twelve.

Police Station, 5 Minutes ago

They all slowly and cautiously began to approach the writhing girl on the ground. Her screams echoed off of the buildings around them. Everything seemed calmer, as if the air had decided it was tired.

"We have to end this, now," Kali said, and they all nodded in agreement.

"I'll do it," Hopper said, raising his rifle and aiming it at her forehead. Eleven felt sad. Once upon a time, this girl had been normal and was living a happy life. And then she was taken by the bad men, and turned into a monster. El knew that it could have very well been her standing in her place if she hadn't escaped and found Mike that night in the woods.

Her thoughts were interrupted by three loud gunshots. To their amazement, the connected but seemed to melt as if her body was molten hot.

"NO!" she screamed, show how managing to stand up to the pain. She sent out a blast of purple lightning streaking towards El, who barely managed to catch it with her powers, and suddenly they were locked

in a desperate battle of sheer will. All around them, the storm started back up with an intense fury, and a force field seemed to form around them, pushing everyone else back 10 feet.

The girl screamed, taking a step towards her, trying her hardest to make her lightning connect with Eleven's body. But she would not give up. She wanted a normal life with Mike, who she loved, and with Hoppe, the man who had no obligations to her but had decided to raise her anyway. She thought of her friends, Dustin, Will, Lucas, and Max, and how they had all helped her one time or another. She thought of all the people that had died because of what this girl did. Steve, Callahan, Mike's family, and countless others. She thought of how her Papa had ruined her life and Twelve's and so many others.

These thoughts angered her, and she used it to increase her powers beyond anything she had ever done before. Blood pooled on her lip and dripped down the side of her face from her ears. Her veins popped out from her forehead and eyes, darkening them.

"NO! YOU CANNOT WIN!" the girl screamed, her voice dark and low from the Mind Flayer possession.

Eleven screamed and raised her other hand, and began to push the lightning back towards its sender. The girl's eyes grew wide with fear as she saw it creeping back towards her. Despite all her effort, it connected, sending her spinning through the air. The storm stopped, although the spores and ash and portal remained. Eleven didn't collapse as she had when she had closed the gate. Instead she felt stronger than she ever had before.

"Is she dead?" she heard Hopper ask from behind her.

She nodded. "Yes."

A black streak flew from the girl's lifeless body. It was the Mind Flayer, or at least the piece of it that had resided inside her. It seemed to hover in the air for a little, observing the four individuals in front of it. It began to streak towards El, who simply stuck up a hand and dissolved it, not unlike what she had done with the Demogorgon two years ago.

She heard footsteps running up the street behind her, and she turned to find her friends running towards them all.

"El!" he called out, smiling at her.

She smiled back, but before she could go to him, she heard the loudest unearthly howl come from behind her, and turned to see the Mind Flayer come out of the portal behind them. She sent Mike flying backwards into Dustin to prevent him from getting too close.

The Mind Flayer raised its tendrils and sent them flying at her. She stood in front of her family and friends on a pile of rubble, facing the demon. She raised her own hands and stopped the tendrils in midair. It let out a howl as it was stopped from reaching her, and it sent more and more shadowy tentacles flying at her, but she caught each and every one of them, stopping them before they got too close.

It thrashed around, trying to break free, but El wasn't going to let it get away. It was time to end this once and for all. She began pushing them back slowly but surely, and felt her feet leave the ground as she expelled more power than she ever had before.

The monster began to be pushed back through the hole and on the edges of town, it began to close. It was much bigger than it had been last year, but it was if the size didn't matter anymore. Later, she and her friends would laugh at this, as when she said it to them they realized it was almost an exact quote from Yoda. Currently however, they were staring in awe as she raised to 20 feet above the ground and screamed, pushing the monster back.

Back.

Back to the hell it had come from.

Back so far it would never be able to come back.

Never be able to hurt her friends again.

With one final push, she sent it flying through the hole, and motioned her hands inward and clapped them together, closing the portal completely. The sky could be seen again now, and it was just about sunset. It was painted with beautiful oranges and yellows and pinks

that she admired as she lowered herself. About 2 feet from the ground she finally felt her strength give out, and she dropped like a stone. She heard feet running towards her and felt someone pick her up.

"El? El? Are you okay?" It was Mike. She weakly wrapped her arms around him.

"It's done," she said, and then she felt her eyes close and she fell into a blissful sleep.

Epilogue

2 years ago, if you asked anyone if they had heard of Hawkins Indiana, they would have almost certainly said no, as it had been a small town with a small population in the middle of nowhere. A year ago, more people would know the name Hawkins, as there had been that controversy over Barb's death caused by the chemicals from Hawkins lab.

Now, you could ask someone in Australia if they had heard of Hawkins Indiana, and they would almost certainly say yes. In the days and weeks and months that followed the "ET Incident" as it would become known as in the following years, Hawkins Indiana was swarmed with government officials. The president even visited. Scientists took samples of the spores and vines that covered the ground. The world was forever changed, as they now knew of a world beyond their own. Panic swept the globe as the governments of the world tried to reassure them that there was no danger.

Most of the town had been completely destroyed. Over half of the population had been killed by the fires, earthquakes, and creatures that had swarmed the town. Mike had cried on El's shoulder when they went to his house so he could see what had happened, but as they had been walking away, they had heard a noise coming from the wreckage. He had sprinted faster than he thought was possible and began throwing boards and bricks away, feeling several splinters enter his fingers, not that he cared. A few minutes later, he had unearthed a dehydrated but living Holly, who had survived by hiding under the kitchen table.

Dustin's house was still standing, but when Hopper checked it first, he had found his mother with her throat slashed. He had covered her body with a sheet and let the boy cry against his shoulder.

Lucas was a little luckier than most. His mom and sister had been killed when their house had caught on fire, but his dad had managed to make it out. Max's stepdad and step brother were killed, but her mom had survived.

They had all gathered at Hopper's cabin, which had survived unharmed as it was so remote. They had to plan their next moves. Nancy, Holly, Mike, and Dustin were all orphans now, and the government would soon be swarming the place as there would be no way to cover this up. They had agreed that they all had to leave town, or else the enhanced individuals would be blamed for the destruction as a scapegoat.

They had all gone back to their homes and packed their clothes and most valuable possessions, such as photographs of lost family members or their super comms, Dustin placed a kiss on the sheet before leaving his house and shutting the door one final time. Hopper made sure to get anything valuable out of the houses for something he had been planning all morning, and he would certainly need a lot of money for it.

They all gathered near Mike's house again and got into the several cars that would be transporting them to Detroit. They would rest there with Kali for awhile before figuring out where to go from there. They drove through Hawkins, observing the damages done. Bodies still covered the streets, but some survivors were beginning to clean up. They were all tearful as they passed the "Leaving Hawkins" sign, as it would be the last time they did that.

They all quickly fell asleep though. Hopper looked in his back seat and saw El and Mike and Dustin all sleeping on each other. He smiled. They had taken a lot of losses, but most of them had gotten through it. Brenner and Twelve were dead, and the Upside Down was hopefully contained for good now.

They had reached Detroit and went back to the warehouse. Everyone there wanted to know where Kali had been, and why she had so

many people with her. She simply put up a hand and told them to wait. She, along with Hopper and Joyce, had gotten all of the kids situated on mattresses and they all quickly fell asleep, Max and Eleven clutching their boyfriends like their lives depended on it, and Dustin, Will, and Nancy all shared a bed too. They had been through so much shit together by now, they were closer than any family. Hopper, Joyce and Holly, Mr. Sinclair, Mrs. Mayfield, and Jonathan all sat around the table and explained with Kali what had happened to the rest of Kali's friends.

They weren't skeptical, as Kali had told them about the lab and she obviously had powers. Over the next few days, Hopper prepared his surprise for them, and the kids planned funerals for everyone they had lost. While they didn't have the bodies, they did have their memories and stayed up late telling each other about their fondest memories of their lost loved ones.

While none of them would ever admit it during the day, they were all plagued with nightmares, and several times a night, one or more of them would wake up screaming or crying, and then would have to be comforted and lulled back to sleep. They never wanted to be alone or have the lights off.

About a week after they had arrived in Detroit, Hopper realized that he had been right. Every newspaper, every magazine, every news channel was talking about Hawkins and interviewing residents. Their story had a few holes, such as Eleven missing and Twelve being evil, but they got the whole another dimension existing down pat.

That day, he returned to the warehouse to find everyone huddled around the table eating lunch. They had nearly been inseparable since the portal had opened, so he wasn't all that surprised.

He clapped his hands together. "I have an announcement to make kids."

They all sat up at this, wondering what he could have to tell him. They looked at him expectantly, and he smiled at the other parents. "Well, I talked to the other parents, and we all agreed that you guys have been through too much together to separate you guys. So, since we were all displaced, we thought it would be best to move into a

large house together," he finished.

Their faces lit up one by one as they realized what that could mean. Mike jumped up with the rest of his friends and they all pulled each other into a group hug. "Guys! We'll get to see each other every day!" he yelled.

"Endless D&D campaigns!" Dustin yelled, much to the amusement of the others.

"Mike, we can share a room!" El said to him, and he nodded happily. Hopper didn't have the heart to ruin the moment by telling them that it would probably not happen, but maybe if they also shared with Dustin or one of the other boys.

And so, that was how the families left a few days later and drove to Idaho. Their house had been found by Hopper on a public computer, and he had quickly called the number and told them he wanted to buy the house. It was large enough for all of the kids to have separate rooms, although he knew that would most likely not happen. There were guest rooms for Jonathan and Nancy as well, and rooms for all of the adults. It had been expensive, but since they had the money from all of their families combined, it hadn't been too bad.

Life went on. Nancy went to Harvard to study law, and Jonathan went to NYU to study photography. The kids all started at the local high school, where the teachers and kids all thought it was odd they were so close, but no one asked about it. Hopper and Joyce got married in 1986. They managed to all eventually get jobs in the town they had moved to, and life was good.

All of the kids got accepted into the same school, as it was a scientific school and all of the boys were pursuing majors in science. El and Max decided to major in speech therapy and early education respectively. In 1992, Mike and Eleven got married. It was a small event in their backyard with their friends and family. Everyone was surprised it had taken this long, as they had been inseparable since they had met and it was obvious they were going to get married. Stacy Terry Wheeler was born on December 2nd, 1995.

Dustin met Rebecca Baker the first semester of college, and the two

of them had hit it off immediately. They had been very attracted to each other due to their similar personalities and interests in Star Wars and sweets. They had gotten married in 1996.

Will got his major in biology and a minor in art studies, and became a very well known painter for his paintings of a dark and mysterious world that was inspired by personal experiences, or so he told the interviewers. He met Robert Imwell in 1995, and the two married each other in 1997.

Max and Lucas had both gotten their degrees and gotten married in 1993. Steve Sinclair was born on August 1st, 1997.

Now it was December 31st, 1999, and they were all gathered at their old house to reign in the New Year together. Joyce embraced her daughter and son-in-law when they walked in the door, and El had gone to help her in the kitchen while Mike talked to Hopper and Mr. Sinclair about Stacy and her experiences in Preschool.

Soon, the house was filled with people and warmth and good smells coming from the food Joyce had prepared for the night. Everyone talked about their jobs and how the year had gone for them. While they had less time nowadays, the boys still tried to get together for a D&D campaign at least once every two months. Eleven smiled at the children playing from the doorway when she felt arms slip around her waist.

"Hey there," she said, turning to kiss her husband.

"Hey," he said after they had separated. He saw tears in her eyes. "What's wrong?" he asked.

She smiled up at him. "Not a damn thing," she said, pulling him close for another kiss.

They both still woke up some nights from nightmares, but they had lessened over time. Time healed all wounds. The pain from the deaths of all those people in 1985 had lessened over time, and the memories had faded. Mike glance at his wife's wrist. Everything faded with time, including tattoos.

The End

Well, that is the end of this story. I hope you all enjoyed the ending and the epilogue. I know the ending was a little too perfect, but I'm a sucker for happy ending. Thank you all so much for reading, and I hope you check out my other story! I will be writing more hopefully soon, so look out for that as well!